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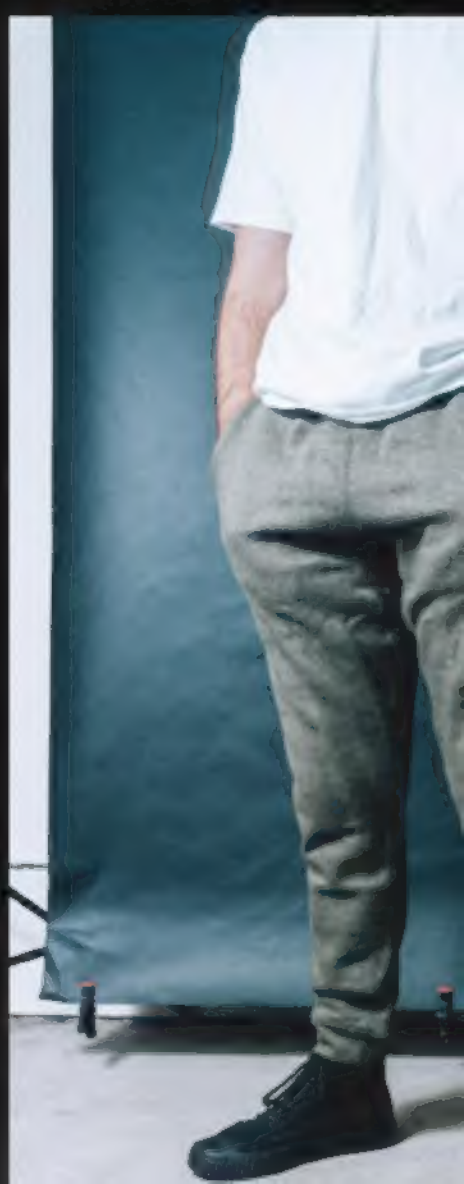

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Trump's Reelection *Campaign*

and Other Great Works of Fiction

COURTESY **SHUTTERSTOCK**

The past week has seen some extraordinary movement by the president of the United States, extraordinary even by the chaos principle that rules Donald Trump. He's definitely feeling some heat.

He attacked Obama-era national security advisor Susan Rice, Joe Biden, other Republicans, Barack Obama and Dr. Anthony Fauci. He claimed he's taking hydroxychloroquine as a prophylactic to ward off the coronavirus, though there's no evidence that it works. He has threatened to withhold federal funding to states such as Michigan that have expanded mail-in voting. He accused Morning Joe co-host and former congressman Joe Scarborough of murder.

The president is too crazy to govern, judging by his latest tirades against the media, the GOP and more—but he may be crazy enough to get reelected

BY **BRIAN KAREM**

But wait—there's more. He defended political strategist and convicted felon Roger Stone and former Fox News CEO Roger Ailes. He continued to muzzle the CDC, tried to distract or defuse an investigation into Secretary of State Mike Pompeo's "Madison Dinners" and fired an inspector general investigating Pompeo and scrutinizing a Trump administration Saudi arms deal.

A very good White House source tells me that Trump these days is "apoplectic," but I think that's just because the source likes saying the word. We know Trump is scattershot and random, which I'm told could be a side effect of hydroxychloroquine.

There's no doubt he's scared. Tuesday he took it out on Fox in a tweet in which he said he's "looking for a new outlet."

Trump is serious about this effort, because he needs to divide the media in order to sell his chaos. Cast doubts on the facts, make up your own and broadcast them loudly and often. That's the key.

I got smacked in the face Monday on three different internet news sites with a survey about the media from President Donald Trump's campaign.

I ignored it twice, but obeying comedy's rule of threes, on the third attempt I acquiesced.

Among the questions: "Do you believe that the mainstream media actually cares about working Americans?" "Do you believe that the mainstream media has unfairly reported on our presidency?" Three different questions asked, "Do you trust MSNBC, CNN, Fox News to fairly report on our presidency?"

The poll gave me a choice of eight different issues on which the mainstream media do the worst job of representing Republicans. I could select as many as I thought applied, including immigration, economics, "pro-life values," religion, individual liberty, conservatism, foreign policy and Second Amendment rights.

The poll asked about due diligence in fact-checking and whether I supported Trump's executive order "restricting people entering our country from nations compromised by radical Islamic terrorism."

It asked me about political correctness and whether I thought the "media is engaging in a witch hunt to take down President Trump."

It asked me about the treatment of people of faith and whether I thought the media wrongly attributed gun violence to Second Amendment rights. It further asked me whether I thought the media used slurs to attack conservatives, pit Republicans against one another in order to elect Democrats, spread false stories about "our movement" and "turned a blind eye to Planned Parenthood's worst actions," without saying what those worst actions were. I guess we're going to have to imagine.

It asked me, "Has the mainstream media been too eager to jump to conclusions about rumored stories?"

Two of the funniest questions came at the end of the poll.

First, "Do you believe that if Republicans were obstructing Obama like Democrats are doing to Trump, the mainstream media would attack Republicans?"

The final question: "Do you believe that our party should spend more time and resources holding the mainstream media accountable?"

The poll, besides being a quagmire of fuzzy thinking, is a study in how to steer opinion. There is no definition of mainstream media, no clear understanding in many cases of what the pollster was asking. Of the final questions, one is complete gibberish and the other is a ploy to achieve vindication for actions already taken.

After I answered the survey as honestly I could, I supplied my e-mail address. A short time later I got an e-mail back from the Trump reelection campaign.

The poll, besides being a quagmire of fuzzy thinking, is a study in how to steer opinion.

Trump is raising funds with inflammatory rhetoric and, with the promised telephone updates, giving his supporters a mainline to the opiate of the Donald. Shoot the drugs (or disinfectant) all you like, but I've covered a lot of news regarding addicts. It seldom goes well. While some are lucky enough to free themselves of their addiction, others end up in rehab, and still others suffer a worse fate. Trump just wants to sell you the drug.

Trump's actions have mobilized a group of GOP members who are working to elect Biden. The Lincoln Project, a group of Republican leaders, is already striking at Trump from the center and the right. California congressman Eric Swalwell announced Wednesday morning he is heading up a PAC that will take it to Trump from the center and the left. As the Lincoln Project recently did, Swalwell's group released a devastating video reminding people of Trump's inaction at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. This November, Swalwell's "Remedy PAC" video tells us, we are "literally voting for our lives."

Or to put it another way, "Idiocracy is not supposed to be a documentary about the Trump administration," as a disgruntled former administration staffer told me last week.

The descent into the madness that became Trump's idiocracy began when I was still a teen, with Richard Nixon's struggle to control the media.

Bottom line: The press is failing.

Nixon influenced Reagan, and it was Reagan, Roger Ailes, Reagan-era FCC chair Mark Fowler and a few others who began changing regulations and rules and passing laws that gutted the media.

Prior to Reagan the airwaves were considered a public trust. Fowler famously said otherwise: To him, it was the same as "selling toasters." Deregulation was sold as a way to save the media, and industry consolidation followed.

As a result, the press no longer fulfills its duty to the Republic. Trump calls it "fake news," which we never had until we had Trump. I call it a systematic abuse of the First Amendment whose origin resides in Nixon's frustration with the press.

Fewer independent voices at the White House is indeed a huge problem—but the times are far more desperate. Thanks to Trump's iniquitous handling of the coronavirus pandemic, there are fewer reporters physically at the White House: Where there were hundreds, there are usually now only a dozen. Having fewer reporters allows the White House to more easily manipulate the message. And the new press secretary, Kayleigh McEnany, has benefited most. She got a congratulatory tweet from her boss over the weekend while fans produced memes glorifying her recent appearances in the briefing room.

It is one thing to be able to handle a small gathering of reporters that includes hand-picked guests, and another to handle a crowded room of 125 journalists from around the world. Conveniently Trump's new secretary came into office at the height of the COVID-19 epidemic; so far, she's gotten by with a smile and a pleasant demeanor. But at the end of the day she still works for Donald Trump. No one who works for the president does anything more or less than what he wants. We're being played.

Bottom line: The press is failing. Part of the problem lies in the lack of institutional knowledge among the White House press corps. For many reporters this is their first administration. They do not know the requirements of their job and find it more difficult to learn because there are so few left with years or decades of first-hand experience. Doug Mills, a photographer from The New York Times, Steve Holland from Reuters and John Roberts from Fox News are three who come to mind who know their business well. There are many others, but those three are among the few still there on nearly a daily basis.

There will come a time when the national sickness passes—when we reflect on how we got here and how we move forward. The press, cornered and cowed, will have to come to terms with its own responsibility in this mess. In the beginning we treated Trump as a novelty act, gave him free media and in so doing promoted him. When he got into office we fought with him and on occasion fought each other. When the COVID-19 pandemic began, social distancing meant fewer reporters, and Trump took advantage of that circumstance as he has every circumstance at every turn.

He is, as his recent poll shows, a master of distraction and manipulation.

He is too crazy to govern, but he may be crazy enough to get reelected.

But he is a caged political animal being attacked from the right, left and center. And his attacks will only become more vicious if his defeat becomes inevitable.

Judging by the events of the past week, he's scared victory will elude him come November.

20Q

Michael Jordan

His Most Supreme Airness discusses team hygiene, trash talk and having Bill Murray as a golf coach

BY **KEVIN COOK**

Last year Michael Jordan led the Chicago Bulls to their fourth NBA title in six years. (They lost when he played baseball.) He won his eighth scoring title and his fourth MVP award. Earth's most famous jock also starred in Space Jam, becoming the only human to work with both Bugs Bunny and Dennis Rodman. He did it with ease and antigrav grace, as usual For Jordan, superhuman feats are no sweat. So why does he need Michael Jordan cologne?

We sent Contributing Editor Kevin Cook to the Rodeo Drive suites of fragrancier Bijan to ask.

"I didn't smell anything, but the air did change when Jordan entered the room. He is regal. Pleasant and sometimes funny, too, but his presence has a bouquet of magnificence. He is in charge of every detail. At one point Bijan barged in; the cologne pooh-bah was worried about a photo of Jordan for an ad campaign.

p'What's missing?' Jordan asked.

p'Your energy, your statement of you,' said Bijan. p"Michael studied the photo for about two seconds. 'It's fine,' he said. End of crisis.

"I couldn't help noticing the official Michael Jordan soap displayed beside his cologne. It was thick as a brick and almost as long."

Q1: Why is your soap so big?
JORDAN: Look at my hand. It's huge, isn't it? So I need a big bar of soap. And I'm not the only one—my teammates need something big to wash their butts with.
Q2: Do you intend to freshen up the NBA's locker rooms?
JORDAN: Starting with my team. I think Scottie Pippen wears Dunhill, but I'll change him over. If I can just get Scottie to try Michael Jordan cologne, he'll come around. Dennis Rodman? I'll give him some, but I don't think he'll use it.
Q3: Is Dennis Rodman more of a Chanel guy?
JORDAN: Dennis is totally different. I never question his attire or his hygiene. I don't infringe on him. He has ways of expressing himself that I don't agree with, but that's Dennis, and we let it go. I would be opposed to seeing him in makeup or a dress on the basketball court. And as far as him playing naked, I just hope I'm not on the court.
Q4: Tell us your fragrance history. Did you ever use Hai Karate?
JORDAN: Sure. I went through Old Spice, Hai Karate—but what I really remember is the smelly stuff my father used to wear, English Leather. The fatherly cologne, yeah, with that wooden top. Sneaking some of his English Leather, spraying it on myself, I'll never forget that.
Q5: Fans love Bugs Bunny, your Space Jam co-star, but we've heard he can be difficult. Did he pay you a common actor's courtesy—showing up to read his lines when he's off camera, so you can react to his delivery?
JORDAN: No. He always sent his double. It made it a little tougher for me, but that's the big time, man. You can do that when you've been a star for 60 or 70 years.

> "You can call Charles Barkley a great second place finisher."

Q6: What made you laugh on the movie set?
JORDAN: Joe Pytka, who directed Space Jam, thinks he's a basketball player. But he can't play. So I played a lot with him and some of the extras. Joe was asking how it really is in the NBA, so I made it physical. Now these extras, they're not just actors, they're basketball players, too, and it got a little rough. Somebody throws an elbow and boom breaks an extra's nose. I was laughing because it was so timely. That's how it is, Joe.
Q7: Let's talk about trash talk. Is it true that Charles Barkley is the funniest talker and Seattle's Gary Payton is the nastiest?
JORDAN: Charles is funny. He kids me about endorsing everything from cologne to underwear. It's a way to get in your head. But if you know Charles, it doesn't bother you. If you've had success over him, you can throw it right back You can call him a great second place finisher. Payton is young and brash He's good. Maybe he talks, but not to me. Still, I could sense the challenge coming off him in the playoffs last year. It's fun when you feel that challenge from a younger player. You have to respond. This is somebody who wants to gain the respect you already have. And maybe he will. It's just that you don't want it to happen this year. That's one of the things that keeps me going.
Q8: How much do you talk on the court?
JORDAN: I am constantly trying to get an edge. There are a lot of mental challenges. Maybe a guy expects me to drive, but I pull up for a jump shot. I might say, g"This could go on all night." Or tell him he can't guard me. I might ask him a question "How many do you want me to score?"
Q9: How does it feel when you're airborne?
JORDAN: It's an act of creativity. You make it up as it goes along. I see things before they happen, things that might

happen, and then alter them—adjust, dish off. It all seems very slow to me, but it might not to you.

Q10: Why are NBA players such sharp dressers?

JORDAN: There are probably more sweaters and jeans in baseball. In a basketball locker room the guys are putting on suits. There's more style, more trendsetting. Here's my theory: It's because people see us wearing shorts all the time. We're so visible on the basketball court, running around in our shorts, that we want to compensate when the game's over.

Q11: Three years ago you quit hoops to try baseball, a more contemplative game. How did you kill all the downtime?

JORDAN: You'll do anything to bide time while waiting for your turn in the batting cage, waiting out a rain delay or riding in the bus. I learned to play hearts, and I also played checkers and dominoes. I filled a book of crosswords. And I listened to some funny arguments. The guys on my minor-league team, most were 21 or younger, and they'd go on about TV shows. Not about whether the show was good. They'd argue about what time it was on. g"It's on at seven!" "No, 7:30!" I was thinking, Man, this makes me feel old.

Q12: What else about joining the Birmingham Barons was tough on the world's greatest athlete?

JORDAN: Hitting. It's hard. And then I'd see some of those kids staying out till three or four in the morning, drinking beer like water, and the next day they'd go four for five.

Q13: Did you chew tobacco?

JORDAN: Not this time. I tried it back in high school baseball—peer pressure—and got a little sick. So in the minor leagues I stuck to sunflower seeds. I'd spit them all over the dugout, practicing my accuracy. We played basketball that way, spitting seeds at a Gatorade cup. I got better at it, but not to a professional level.

I still think baseball is the greatest fun, the best camaraderie you can have. When a basketball game is over, it's zip-zip, 12 guys out the door in different directions. The camaraderie in baseball, at least in the minors, was unbelievable—10 or 12 players hanging out together every night. I still keep in touch with some of those guys.

Q14: Every minor-league ballplayer knows how to rewire a motel TV to steal premium cable. Did you?

JORDAN: No, I can afford to pay. But nobody else was ordering movies; they were saving their money. That's why my room was the team theater. All the guys came in to watch the movie with me.

Q15: What's your dream foursome for golf?

JORDAN: Can I say five? Tiger Woods, Arnold Palmer, Davis Love III, Ben Hogan and me. We play skins, and nobody wins a skin unless he knocks a hole in one.

Here's a real group: me, Larry Bird and Bill Murray. We've played a few times. Talk about talk—Bill is a player, a commentator and a damn coach all at once. It's just like Caddyshack. He'll be teeing off and giving the play-by-play on what club he's using, what kind of shot he wants to play. He does it while you're playing, too.

Q16: Can you be psyched out on the course?

JORDAN: Sometimes. There's a lot of reverse psychology on a golf course. My short game is probably the best part of my game, but I'll hit the tee ball anywhere. So mostly the attacks come when I'm teeing off. A guy will drop a tidbit: g"Michael, there's water on the right. Make sure you go left." It's that simple—golf is such a mental game that you can't block it out. I'll be trying to focus on a good swing, but if you have to think about focusing, your concentration's not there, is it? Golf does that to you. Think about the negative and you're in trouble. You're in the water.

Q17: Why do white guys look so bad with shaved heads?

JORDAN: [*Laughing*] I guess it has to do with tanning. They've never tanned that part of their damn bodies, so the head stands out a little.

Q18: When you were 15, you got cut from your high school basketball team. What do you remember about that moment?

JORDAN: Looking at the list on the bulletin board. I looked through it four or five times. My name wasn't there. I went immediately to question the coach. I thought he was wrong. But it didn't help. Years later, I thought about that when I saw my name in the newspaper. It was when the Bulls won the first championship. Everyone said an NBA scoring champion couldn't win the NBA title, but I'd just done it. There it was in the paper. So I proved everyone wrong. That's one of my strong points.

Q19: Fifteen years ago this spring, as a freshman at North Carolina, you won the NCAA tourney with a last-second jumper from the corner. Did you know it was going in?

JORDAN: It felt good, but I was fading away, the defense was coming. I never saw it go in. I knew from the crowd, hearing the crowd noise. That was the beginning of Michael Jordan.

Q20: Was Shaquille O'Neal joking when he told us that you really can fly?

JORDAN: People can fly. Some fly higher than others, that's all.

MONICA
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Describe yourself in three words
The three most prominent traits about myself would be my confidence, adaptability, and my ability to be open-minded.

Were you excited to shoot for Playboy?
Yes, it's an amazing feeling to see my dedication paying off. Playboy has been one of my biggest dreams come true.

What was it like starting out as a model?
Difficult, many people didn't take me seriously. Luckily, as time went on, people began to give me the credit I deserved!

What would you consider to be your biggest challenge as a model so far?
The virus has been such a game changer, traveling involves more awareness and caution but it's a challenge I'm up for.

Describe your perfect day off when you are not modelling?
Soaking up the sun while out camping at a lake, nothing more peaceful.

Do you feel more like a city person or a country person?
City, I enjoy the country but cities bring inspiration and motivation to be so much more, you're surrounded by people with goals and direction in life.

If you could live anywhere in the world, where would it be?
One of the coldest places I can think of, Alaska, such a gorgeous place!

Do you have a secret talent?
Very little people know, cooking is my second passion. Self-taught as a little kid, good food brings me comfort.

A guilty pleasure?
My guilt pleasure is most definitely food. Nothing better than a meal that feels like home in a bite.

Which song is absolutely certain to make you cry whenever you hear it?
Idontwanttobeyouanymore by Billie Eilish, her expressiveness is inspirational.

What is your favorite word in any language and what does it mean?
The word "Wallflower" because of the book by Stephen Chbosky. The word is describing someone who's shy because they're excluded. As a kid, I was a wallflower and modeling helped me blossom into who I am today.

Any last words you would like to share with the readers?
Always stay true to who you are, people gravitate towards genuine people. Lastly, confidence is one of the sexiest trait, don't be afraid to embrace yourself.

REGGIE BUSH ON LIFE *After* THE NFL

Trump, Tom Brady, Money and Mistakes

Reggie Bush is constantly observing. His gift for locating holes and eluding tackles was clear during his three years at USC, where he established himself as one of the elite college running backs of his or any era. He followed this with 11 seasons in the NFL, including a Super Bowl win for the New Orleans Saints in 2010. So perhaps it's fitting that since his retirement in 2017 his life has continued to revolve around studying and absorbing—but instead of defensive schemes, he's now sizing up our culture, our leaders, our status quo.

The recently retired running back and his wife, Lilit, tell Playboy about their effort to spread positivity with *Celebrity Watch Party*

Bush, who joined Fox Sports' college football coverage last year as an analyst, adds to his TV résumé this month with the Fox series Celebrity Watch Party. The unscripted show features, among a slew of recognizable faces, Reggie and his wife, Lilit Avagyan, on their couch at home as they react to episodes of 9-1-1, Nailed It! and RuPaul's Drag Race. Watch Party is the latest example of TV networks pivoting to create new programming as Hollywood production remains shut down during the pandemic.

Even as he binge-watches TV and raises three young children with Lilit, the 35-year-old star has a lot on his mind. Joining his wife for a recent conversation with Playboy, Reggie shared his thoughts on Trump's handling of the coronavirus, Tom Brady calling for an investigation into the murder of Ahmaud Arbery, the price of playing football and the financial guidance that no one gave him.

PLAYBOY: What made you want to do Celebrity Watch Party?

REGGIE: The show is doing a great job allowing people to focus on some positive, funny content. More than ever, we need positive stuff, because on social media it seems like it's all negative, all drama-filled, and you start to live in this different world where you get paralyzed with Instagram and Twitter. It happens to me all the time. So we try to remind ourselves to not focus too much on the negative—the police brutality, the politics, the pandemic. We try to digress a little from time to time, because we need normalcy.

PLAYBOY: What's it like to know that people are watching you as you watch TV?

REGGIE: We have such good chemistry, and we thought it would be funny. We're not acting on the show. It's just me and my wife hanging out. We even have a drink.

LILIT: Typically you don't react much when you're watching a show, so the only change is that whatever you're thinking, now you have to say it out loud. You can't just think it in your mind, because then there wouldn't be a show. But then I'd say a couple of things, and he'd have to check me and tell me, "Don't forget you're on TV and you can't say that."

PLAYBOY: I imagine sports would be a go-to viewing choice for you, if we currently had that option. What would an ideal return of sports look like to you?

REGGIE: We're preparing as if football season's going to continue, until it doesn't. And that's all we can do. That part is not in our control, and we pray and hope that the government and our health care system continue to work toward progress so things can go back to being normalized again. Every time you turn on the news, there's a death-count ticker, so we found a way to turn this very tragic thing into a sport. All they're doing is creating fear. We're very reactive in this country, and we were very reactive to this pandemic, which is why we're in this situation now, even though there were warning signs. In China, they built a hospital in a matter of days. We're the greatest country in the world, so why can't we do things like that? We can't say we don't have the resources.

PLAYBOY: You frequently use social media to spotlight social justice issues and the underprivileged. Why is it important to you to use your post-playing platform in this way?

REGGIE: It's powerful for people to use their platform. We try to use our platform the right way, but that doesn't mean we're always going to make the right decisions. People assume that when you stand for something positive and try to bring awareness to things, you're not going to be mistaken, or you shouldn't be able to make mistakes. That couldn't be further from the truth. Some of the most successful people in the world are at that point in their lives because they learned from their mistakes. For my wife and me, we've learned so much, and we try to make sure we take away as much as we can from every situation, from every issue, from mistakes and progress alike.

> "I'm not saying I'm going bankrupt, but if I had the proper knowledge back then, some things would be different."

PLAYBOY: Anquan Boldin is another former NFL player who helps bring attention to injustice. He has been vocal about Ahmaud Arbery's death, as have you.

REGGIE: The first time I saw the video of the Ahmaud Arbery murder, I didn't understand what I was watching. I was like, How could somebody just pull out a shotgun and kill this kid like that? Over the years, social media has afforded us the luxury of not being able to escape things that smack us right in the face. Before, with something like this, it was a story, and there was a police report to it, and everybody else made their decisions. Now we're seeing it on camera, so it's more direct, it's more in your face, and it's more shocking. When you see something like that, you just wonder, How can somebody take another life that easily?

I love the fact that Anquan Boldin and other athletes are using their platform in the right way, to speak to social injustice or police brutality or racism or politics, and using it in a positive way. Unfortunately there's been a lot of negativity from our president. I believe this is affecting our country and the fear that our country is living in. When our leadership is not in the right place, and you mix that with a pandemic, you mix that with a market crash and all these things we're seeing now on social media, right before our eyes—this is a ticking time bomb. This is not a good place for us to be in as a country. A lot of people are now being separated from their identities, because our identities come from work, unfortunately.

PLAYBOY: Boldin recently praised Tom Brady for signing a letter supporting an investigation into Arbery's death.

REGGIE: That was a powerful move by Tom Brady. I don't even know if he understands just how powerful it was, because we need more of our white superstars—celebrities, athletes, entertainers. We need them all. This is not just a black and brown problem. This is not just a minority problem. We are all literally in this together. So when Tom Brady signed that letter, it was so powerful to me, because to be honest with you, I've never seen him step into the limelight in that way. I've always seen Tom Brady the football player and the businessman and the marketing genius, but I've never seen Tom Brady step out as a person who's just standing up for other people—and black people—in the community. That's so powerful, because he has fans who are all shapes, sizes and colors. When we have somebody like Tom Brady, our biggest superstar in the NFL, step up to the plate, hopefully other leaders will see that. And other people from other sports and different genres will follow suit.

PLAYBOY: I imagine it can be a tough decision to potentially alienate part of your fan base.

REGGIE: I still heavily side with the New Orleans Saints, and the Saints play Tampa Bay twice a year, so we usually go to the games. When I do see Tom Brady, the first thing I'm going to tell him is I appreciate him for stepping up and stepping out, because it's not easy A lot of people think it's easy just to sign your name to something, just because it's the right thing to do. And maybe it's the new way, for everybody to come and jump on a bandwagon, but it's not easy when you have that kind of star power behind you. You're putting a lot on the line. The first thing I'm going to tell him is "Man, awesome job We appreciate you."

PLAYBOY: With Brady joining the Tampa Bay Buccaneers this off-season, which team will end up on top of that division?

REGGIE: Tampa Bay just quickly climbed the ladder. They are a real threat for the NFC South. It's crazy, because now we know it's going to be Drew Brees's last year. And most likely Tom Brady's last year, but who knows? The guy just seems to not age. But Tampa's a real problem for the Saints. If you think about how good they were with Jameis Winston, despite the 30 interceptions—now you replace him with Tom Brady, who doesn't turn the football over and is literally the GOAT. Right away, this automatically puts them in the conversation for winning the division. That's scary. The Saints are going to have to be special to win the division this year. Even though the past two years were pretty tough losses, this might be the toughest year.

PLAYBOY: I'd love to see Drew Brees on Celebrity Watch Party one of these days, so you need to make that happen. Do you and Drew still chat?

REGGIE: We have not spoken yet. But we talk from time to time. When I do see him, I will definitely speak about the state of the division. I really feel like they can win it, but again, it's going to be tough.

"I know I could help teams. I don't think it—I know it."

PLAYBOY: When you see someone like Frank Gore, a running back who keeps coming back to the game after all these years, do you wish you were still in there?

REGGIE: No. I'm happy where I am. Frank Gore is an amazing player, and he's been able to play a long time in the NFL. That was part of his calling. If it was part of my calling to still be in the league, I'd still be in the league. I can still play. We don't retire in a wheelchair. We don't retire on one leg. When we retire, we're still young. We can still play. The issue is, this is a young person's game. It always has been and always will be. Specific positions allow you to play a lot longer than most other positions, like quarterback or kickers. For running backs, if you can get to 10 years, that's like dog years. That's like playing 20 years in the NFL from your body's perspective, with the amount of pain and torture and trauma your body has taken.

When I retired after 11 years in the league, I could have played another three years, but for a running back who's 32 years old, you're not going to get a big contract. You're not going to get a lot of money. So then it becomes, what is worth my body? What is worth my livelihood? What amount of money is worth it for me to be able to run around with my kids and not have to play another two, three years and possibly suffer more concussions, and more injuries and body trauma, for a million bucks? I'm not saying a million dollars isn't a lot of money. But is it worth your life? The answer is no. For me, I retired, and I'm happy with where I'm at. I'm happy not playing football.

PLAYBOY: You played your final season with the Buffalo Bills. As a Bills fan, I feel you could have still helped the team with that playoff push last year.

REGGIE: I know I could help teams. I don't think it—I know it. But that chapter has been closed in my life, and I'm very comfortable with that. I'm actually happy to not be getting hit. I'm happy to not deal with my knee being swollen on game days and practice days and having to get it drained, and all these different things you guys don't

see. You guys turn on the TV on Sunday, and you're like, "Oh, shit. This is the greatest sport in the world." And it is one of the greatest sports in the world. But it comes with a price. It comes with sacrifices. And those sacrifices are what people don't see. The game will always be one of my first loves, but I'm happy with where I'm at right now.

PLAYBOY: Certainly the idea of when to retire is a hot topic. Even now, debate continues over the Packers drafting quarterback Jordan Love in the first round when they still have Aaron Rodgers.

REGGIE: That's business in the NFL. That's how it works. It don't matter who you are. At some point in time, you will be replaced. I don't care if your name is Tom Brady, Aaron Rodgers or anybody else. That's just the nature of the beast. That's why I said it's a young person's game. Everybody was like, "How could they draft Jordan Love?" And I'm saying, "Why would they not draft Jordan Love?" This is a new coach. When coaches come in, they want their own culture. They don't want the culture they inherited, because clearly that culture was what got the previous coach fired. They want to bring in their own players so they can start with the freshman talent.

Aaron Rodgers is a great player, but you're not going to be able to teach Aaron Rodgers anything. He's already reached that peak where you have to adjust to him; Aaron Rodgers can't adjust to you. I don't necessarily mean that a coach can't coach him. He can be coachable, but it's different when you're trying to teach a 35-year-old quarterback something new. Jordan Love is also the culture of the game and of college football right now everything's about dual-threat quarterbacks. That's the reason quarterbacks like Patrick Mahomes and Lamar Jackson are having a lot of success: because now you've got to be able to run too. You can't just sit in the pocket.

PLAYBOY: Do you ever think about trying your hand at coaching?

"When Tom Brady signed that letter, it was so powerful to me, because I've never seen him step into the limelight in that way."

REGGIE: Nope, no coaching for me. Maybe I'd take a front-office position, but I'm not trying to go back and coach. I would like to help people, but I'd rather just pop in for guidance Guidance is the one thing that young athletes coming through the college system miss on so much. I missed on it. They're about to start paying college athletes. This is something that has never been experienced before, and it's going to destroy some people if their foundation is not in the right place.

The one thing I wish I had early in my career is proper financial knowledge. I hired good agents, and I hired a good team. But I allowed that good team to make decisions for me. I'm not saying I'm going bankrupt, but if I had the proper knowledge back then, some things would be different. People just assume, "Well, you got all this money, so you're good." It's actually the opposite. The more money you have, the more danger you're in. Because now you're a freaking open target for a lot of people It's a nasty world out there, and it's about to get nastier. You're going to really start to see the true colors of a lot of people, and a lot of businesses too. You're going to see people doing some crazy stuff to make money, because our market is crashing.

PLAYBOY: Getting back to Celebrity Watch Party, some episodes feature you both watching cooking shows. These days everyone is experimenting with recipes. Has your family had any kitchen mishaps?

REGGIE: My wife is a five-star chef. I'm not even saying that because she's sitting right here. My wife can really cook, and honestly, it was a big part of the reason I married her. [laughs] Nah, I'm kidding. But she cooks so good, man.

PLAYBOY: How do you handle parenting during quarantine?

LILIT: It's important for their mental well-being that they understand why they can't go anywhere. They don't understand why they can't go to school and why they can't go to all the fun places. So we let them know what they need to know, and no more than that. We explain what's happening, but at the same time, we protect them to keep them from being fearful. They understand that life is beautiful and that things are going to be normal again.

PATTY DUKE. COURTESY **PENGUIN BOOKS**

How 'Valley of the Dolls' Became a *Rallying Cry* for Queer Communities

and Made a Lifelong Ally of Its Star

A conversation with Stephen Rebello, author of the dishy and delightful new 'Dolls! Dolls! Dolls!'

BY **JAMES RICKMAN**

Last week we ran an excerpt from the new book Dolls! Dolls! Dolls! Deep Inside Valley of the Dolls, the Most Beloved Bad Book and Movie of All Time. In it, author Stephen Rebello brings to life the on-set war between star Patty Duke and director Mark Robson, whose skirmishes included weaponized donuts. Throughout Rebello's book, the laughs are abundant, but so are the moments of wrenching struggle. And even as Dolls! offers such dishy delights as an up-close view of Judy Garland's disastrous and short-lived involvement in the movie, it's easy to drift back to Duke's perilous journey from Oscar-winning child star abused and exploited by her legal guardians, through the premiere of Dolls and its enshrinement as a beloved celluloid fiasco, through decades in and out of addiction and acclaim, and ultimately to grace.

Toward the end of the book, Rebello (who's also a screenwriter and Playboy contributing editor) reveals that Duke eventually started to speak out for others living with addiction, mental illness and trauma, and that she connected with legions of LGBTQ Dolls devotees who helped her make peace with her demons—and with a movie that might have tanked her career. Here, in an interview conducted shortly before the book's release, Rebello speaks to Playboy about these transformations—the movie's, Duke's and, as he wrote the book, his own.

PLAYBOY: At then end of Dolls! Dolls! Dolls! you touch upon Patty Duke's advocacy for queer communities. Why do you think it became such a passion for her?

REBELLO: I think that she understood what it was like to be the other—although

that isn't always the open sesame to being kind or being an advocate. Queer people are everywhere, and lots and lots and lots are in show business. But I hear all the time people who've been in the business forever being absolutely idiotic and disgusting about queer people and transgender people and the whole gamut.

Patty, I think, really got it. She had been so battered by her own childhood, her own parents. She was exploited and damaged and commodified by the Rosses, who managed her, quote unquote. She was basically a house mule for them. It's why Patty and Judy Garland, in that brief time that Judy Garland was on the movie, got so intensely close. Both those women had a real appreciation for what it's like to be misjudged, laughed at, misunderstood, to have this freakish talent that most of the world merely exploited. Both of them, as children, were being force-fed drugs — one by her studio, the other by her so-called protectors.

PLAYBOY: So how did that background help her become an ally?

REBELLO: Valley of the Dolls strangely was an eye-opening experience for Patty Duke as she started to see it with gay audiences. For years, she would not talk about the movie at all. I completely understand why: When they're showing your award-clip reel, that's not necessarily one you want to include. But there's an entire population of people — of outcasts—who got the humor, who loved the outlandish costumes, the wig-upon-wig-upon-wig of it, the excess, the booze and drug aspects.

And so when she experienced that movie with gay audiences in San Francisco, in New York, in Chicago, Patty got the edge and the laughter and the sarcasm, but she also got these waves of love coming her way. Neely O'Hara was like an emblem for gay people. Lots of lesbian kids and grownups tell me all the time about how Neely is an inspiration because she takes no shit from anybody. She brings everything crashing down around her head, but she's basically a decent kid who got messed up along the way. I think you can understand that whether you're straight, gay, bi, whatever: Neely says what's on her mind.

So Patty tuned in. She found a source of love. She found a way to reconcile the movie that was supposed to put her on the map and did — but not the right map. Suddenly it became something that she could come to terms with. It's kind of a double whammy, because it not only reached this enormous worldwide audience and made a fortune, but it was ridiculed — so there was that. But then it found this other audience that for years and years kept Patty laughing at herself in the best possible way. Isn't the point of our lives to get deeper, to get kinder, to get more empathic? I think she did.

PLAYBOY: She also became an advocate for people living with mental illness and addiction.

REBELLO: I think this movie, strangely, helped her in that process. She found that she had gone through so much hell, and lived through it, and survived it, that she now wanted to tell other people that they could, too. Like many recovering addicts, she never made it seem like any day was a snap for her to get through, but that every day was a

Sharon Tate, right, received advice from castmate Duke on ways to respond to journalists without badmouthing *Valley of the Dolls*

There's an entire population of people who got the humor, who loved the outlandish costumes, the wig-upon-wig-upon-wig of it.

Duke, left, preparing to shoot a scene for director Mark Robson, middle, with whom her conflicts were legendary

struggle, and that every day is a struggle for everyone we know, in one way or another. She kept crisscrossing the country, speaking to people one-on-one. She was tireless, and she did it on her own dime. What a great way to use your gift and talent, bringing insight and heart and empathy and joy and understanding to people. I can't think of a better thing than any actor can do—to say thank you to someone by telling them they're worth talking to.

So my hat is off to Patty Duke, and I didn't necessarily start that way. I think I learned a thing or two on this journey.

PLAYBOY: Did the book originally have a different tone?

REBELLO: Three years ago my agent asked me why I wasn't writing another book. I said, "Well, I'm tired of coming up with serious ideas I really love that no one wants to publish." And I said, "Fuck it, I'm going to come up with something that I think I'll have fun with." But instead of just having a rip-roaring time, which is what I expected, I got caught up in it. Let's say you and I watch Valley of the Dolls in the theater; I'd be laughing hysterically, but it's tougher for me now to watch Patty, for example. She's still wildly over the top, but the laugh is coming from a different place. Honestly, sometimes it catches in my throat.

PLAYBOY: There's a quote in the excerpt in which Duke talks about her preparation for the role: "I went to bars and watched confused, tormented people full of self-pity and wondered how they got to be that way." What if the movie had been made in that spirit? Would it have endured as a serious look at sexism, addiction and mental illness?

REBELLO: You have to remember that Darryl Zanuck, who was still basically running the studio at that time, had made really important, socially relevant movies like Gentleman's Agreement, which dealt with antisemitism, and The Snake Pit, which dealt with mental illness in women. His vision for Valley of the Dolls was that it could be that. It could be an important look at opioids, way before we all knew about them; about women having no financial agency, no control over their careers, no place in the world without a man.

The Dolls screenplay never got there, and they never got a director who was willing to go there. But people forget that it was a risk to write that book, to make that movie and to be in that movie. The way it turned out—I mean, it's not irrelevant, but what some of the people making that movie were trying to do was noble. That's one of the reasons I wanted to write the book. There's an important story to tell.

Creating Wonder With New York City's *Suvoon*

After 20 years on the scene, the artist's mythological creations evolve

BY **ROMY OLTUSKI**

The artist known as Swoon sits at a sketch table in her Red Hook, Brooklyn studio, fiddling with a disembodied papier-mâché head.

"There's nothing private," she says, running a hand through her wild curls as I roam one of two rooms she rents in a labyrinthine artists-and-makers' complex. Behind her hangs a large-scale mural depicting gritty but feminine myth-like scenes of motherhood. Smaller, ethereal cut-out portraits of women, many of them family and friends, are arranged in small clusters on the surrounding walls.

Because she hosted a party here recently, her studio is tidier than usual, she says, seemingly by way of apology.

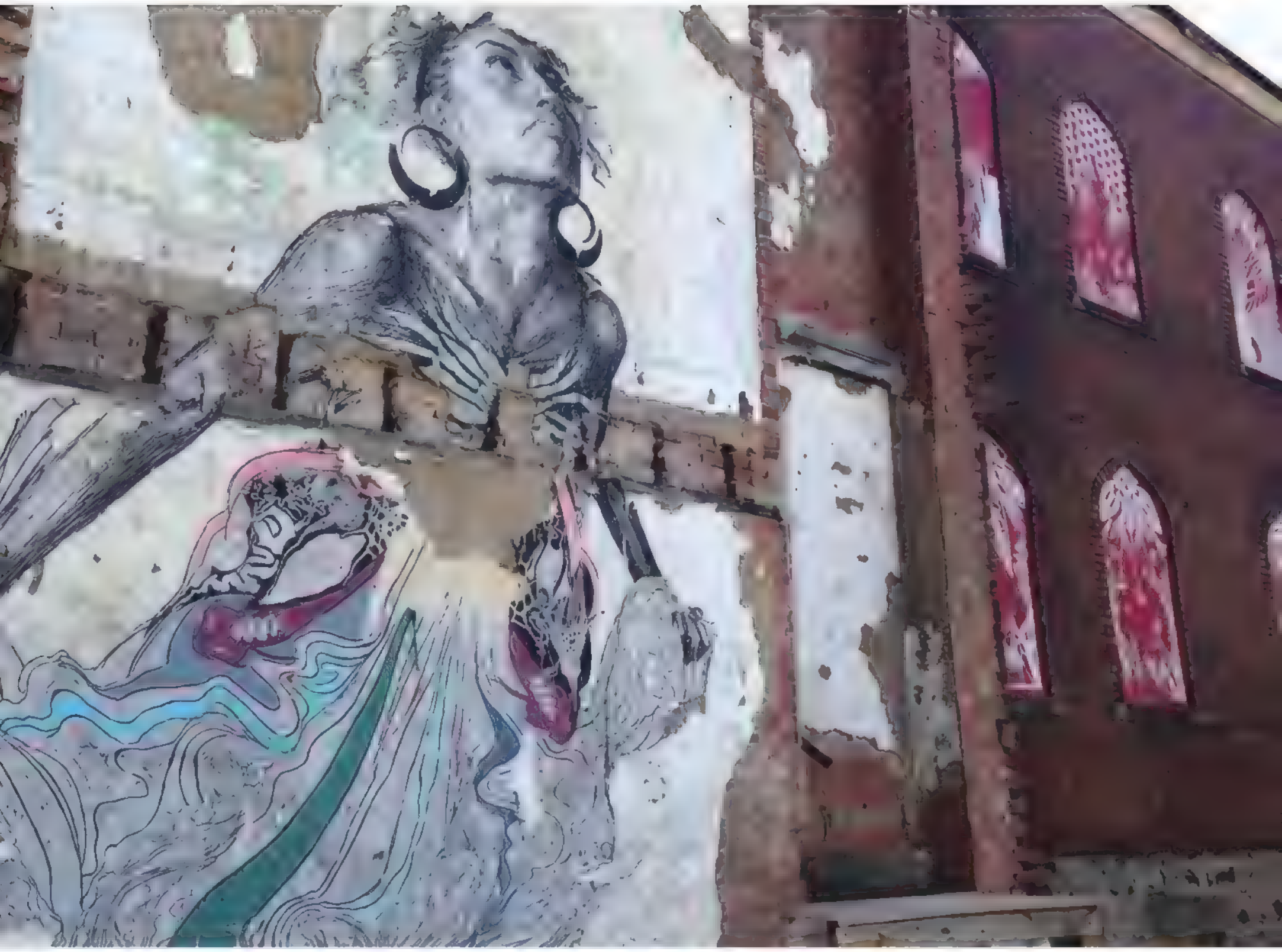
The spaces Swoon creates are more often overflowing: Her recent show Cicada, at the Jeffrey Deitch gallery in New York, features a tangle of wire and cloth spilling out of the wall into a lush, overgrown swamp-like scene. Paper flowers and insects swarm a mer-like character, who cracks her ribs open to reveal snakes uncoiling from her heart. The fabric jumble appears to be gobbling up another figure, its limbs disappearing like moss-choked flotsam.

Cicada, 2019, installation view at Jeffrey Deitch gallery
***Photographed by** Genevieve Hanson*

The recent body of work she's been developing, beginning with Cicada, marks a new direction for Swoon. Injecting her characters with movement, she has adopted into her practice an entirely new medium she's spent the past two years teaching herself: stop-motion film. Meanwhile, her visual language has taken on a more explicitly sinister and introspective tone, a departure for an artist who made her name beautifying the outside world.

Swoon, born Caledonia Curry in New London, Connecticut (she spent most of her childhood in Daytona Beach, Florida), began pasting her dreamy ink-block portraits on city walls in the late 1990s. Alongside peers like Shepard Fairey, Banksy and her good friend JR, she became central to a youth movement fueling street art's ascent. Swoon was one of the few women to gain recognition in that world. Her bold, feminine murals, with nods to Greek mythology, soon captivated major museums and galleries, which she filled with immersive multimedia installations.

Her 2014 exhibit Submerged Motherlands shaded viewers under a paper tree that reached the height of the Brooklyn Museum's 72-foot-tall rotunda. It was the museum's first solo show dedicated to a living street artist.



Thalassa. 2013, street paste-up

From early on, Swoon saw art as a medium for activism, creating "spaces of wonder" that bring people together. In New Orleans, together with the New Orleans Airlift collective, she created a musical village whose ramshackle treehouses double as functioning instruments. With her community of punk artists and DIY craftspeople she famously built three rafts out of garbage and sailed them across the Adriatic Sea and into the Venice Biennale, uninvited. The renegade crew invited onlookers to join them onboard.

"Swoon's practice is based in generosity," says Anne Pasternak, the director of the Brooklyn Museum and a longtime champion of Swoon. "She wants to create dignified, humanistic, beautiful things about people, for people. She uplifts those who are less visible in our society, and she transforms the most banal and even devastated sites into places for real beauty."

After the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, Swoon launched a decade-long project building colorful, disaster-resistant homes in the remote village of Cormiers. Having just finished the rafts, Swoon says, "I was working with a lot of artists and builders that knew how to confront exceptionally difficult situations and problem solve in unusual ways. I had an instinct that we could make that skillset useful."

In Philadelphia's Kensington neighborhood, which has one of the highest rates of opiate overdoses in the country, she leads an art therapy workshop for people in the throes of addiction. It's a project she plans to grow in tandem with her outspoken efforts to combat the stigma surrounding addiction.

If there's a thread that runs through Swoon's diverse body of work, it's "that idea that creativity can be a really powerful part of how you rebuild after disasters of any kind," she says. "Social, physical, all different kinds."

Submerged Motherlands, 2014, installation view at Brooklyn Museum of Art. **Photographed by** Tod Seelie

The Music Box, 2012, New Orleans. **Photographed by** Tod Seelie

Swoon's early life was colored by the chaos of her parents' heroin addiction and struggles with mental illness. Forgiving them took years of therapy and meant reconciling memories of fear and trauma with memories of joy. "I literally thought my mom was going to kill me sometimes," she says, describing a weeklong psychosis her mother experienced when Swoon was six. "And my mom would bake big zucchini bread and take me to art classes and be this wonderful person, and those two things are just true."

That dual nature became a central refrain in Swoon's work, the figure of "dark mother goddess" looming large in many of her installations. Partially autobiographical, her art was both an escape and a form of therapy.

"Almost whatever I'm doing, it's going to be through art," she says. "Am I thinking through a problem? It's going to happen through art. Am I healing all these old wounds? It's going to happen through art. Am I getting friends together? Art."

In Cicada and in her growing body of stop-motion films, Swoon uses art to go inward, unearthing the trauma lodged in parts of her mind she hadn't dared explore.

Behind the swamp-like installation that welcomes visitors to Cicada and an adjoining room filled with portraits of her friends is the show's centerpiece: a small movie theater where a five-minute, semi-narrative reel brings Swoon's characters to life.

Their awkward, fitful transformations are as discomfiting as they are mesmerizing. In one vignette, a Raggedy Ann doll is smothered by the "tarantula mother," a paper spider with an anthropomorphic head and snake-like tongues. Cicadas flit their wings in haunted home scenes, colorful flower beds and underwater dream worlds—which were actually filmed underwater; Swoon spent last May at an artists' residency established in Robert Rauschenberg's former estate, sinking her drawings into the late pop legend's swimming pool to capture the serene "amniotic world" of rebirth. ("Some of them survived," she says enthusiastically.)

Her decision to introduce what she calls "time-based storytelling" into her work was driven by a head-on collision with temporality. In 2013 Swoon lost her mother to lung cancer and, a year and a half later, her father to suicide. It forced the artist to reckon with the past. "It almost felt as though I got sucked out backward through my childhood," she says. "All this stuff got re-enlivened, and I had to deal with it."

Swimming Cities of Switchback Sea, 2008, on the Hudson River. **Photographed by** Tod Seelie

Monica (2013, street paste-up

After that inflection point, the personal nature and raw emotional depth of her work reached a new pitch. "I've been really outward all my life, working out on the street, working in community," she says. "And I just felt this call of like, Girl, you need to get inside and you need to work through some things and you need to to be introspective."

When she did, she says, "I was like, Hey, there's this old dream I had 20 years ago of making films, and street work and community-based work just kind of took center stage. But actually, this is still here."

Swoon sees the stuttering nature of stop-motion as an apt parallel to the disassociation she experienced as a child. "When you're tiny and things are shithouse crazy, one of the coping mechanisms that's available is to just be like, Bonk, I am not even here; I am somewhere else."

Art allowed her to create those other worlds, but it also left her feeling "there were gaps in the frame" when it came to her sense of reality. She grew up fearing that her family's history of mental illness would eventually catch up to her. "I was always like, I'm just going to get mine."

Cicada is Swoon's unfiltered confrontation of past trauma, but it's also a reverie on the transformation that introspection can bring. "I called it Cicada because of the way the cicadas go underground and do this incredible hibernation process and then emerge, like out of these other forms of themselves," she says.

While the show began a new phase in the artist's career, it also celebrated a homecoming: The Jeffrey Deitch gallery is the site of Swoon's first major show, which in 2005 garnered international attention almost overnight; she was 27. As a curator, Deitch carved out a niche spotting promising artists and facilitating their wildest, most unsellable ideas, and his gallery at 76 Grand Street became the epicenter of a new wave of experimental multimedia art, including

Tarantula Mothe, 2018
Stop motion animation, stills

Angel as Seraph, 2019
Stop motion animation, stills

Swoon's cobbled-together cityscape installation there, whose opening drew some 800 people, by her memory. The afterparty was an impromptu block party where a noise-punk band performed atop an illegally parked truck and gallery-goers crowd-surfed the artist down a shoulder-to-shoulder-packed Grand Street.

"I was like, Anything else is going to feel less than," says Swoon, who was nervous to return to the reopened space 14 years later.

The night before Cicada opened in November, she posted about her insecurity on Instagram. "I'm 41 years old now…and no longer a central, active part of a spontaneous youth movement (which was then exploding all over the world). I'm just me now. Callie. Learning a new thing, and showing it to the world," she wrote. "I couldn't help but compare myself to myself."

Swoon no longer considers herself a street artist. It's been years since she's wheat-pasted on city walls with any regularity. Going underground, as she describes it, is part of what has allowed her to explore the innermost crevices of her subconscious.

It has also freed her to create her most boldly sexual work yet.

"My work has had this reputation for being PG," she says of her earlier pieces. For street artists, there's a certain civic duty to self-censor because audiences of graffiti art often haven't chosen to be; they encounter it on their way to work, to school.

But seeing her community of artists and activists reconvene to uplift her was joyful in another way. "We found ways to make it beautiful and fun but to also acknowledge, 'Yeah, we've grown up,'" she says, adding with a laugh, "I don't want to surf Grand Street again."

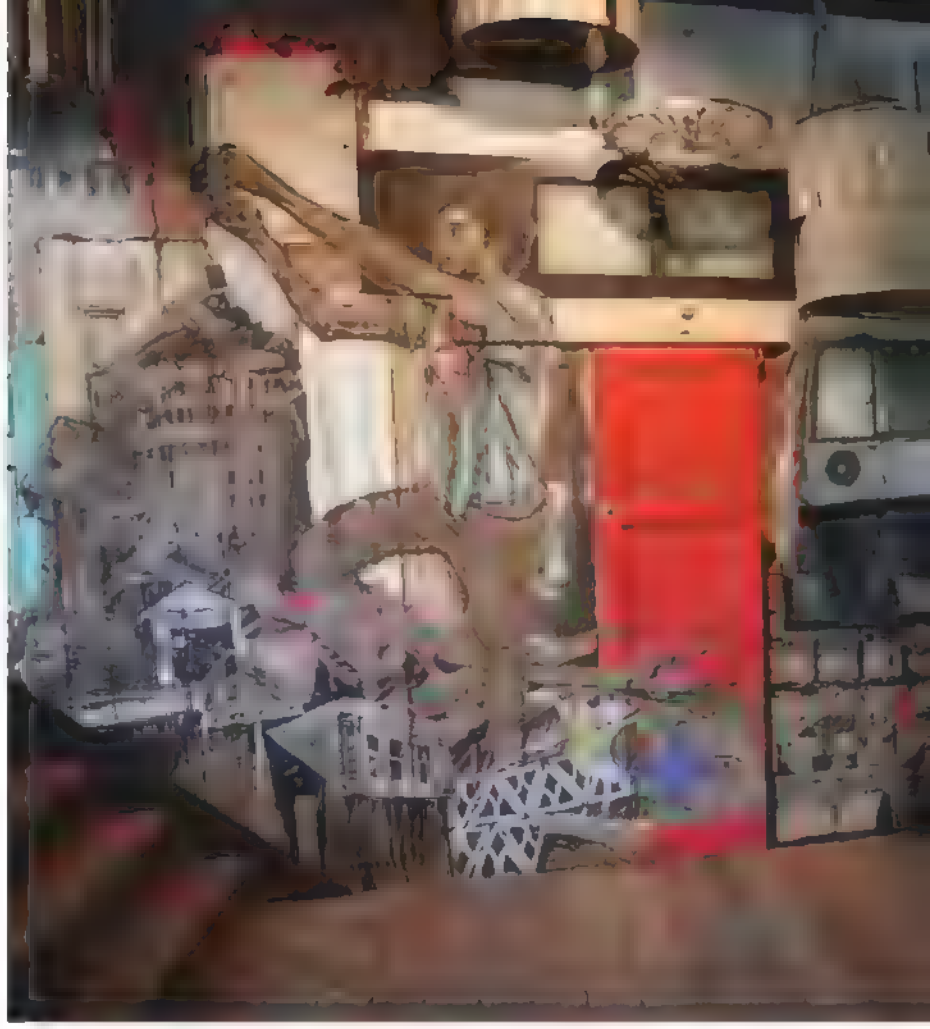
"My whole life, working out on the street, I had this feeling that you're sort of part of this community in a way that you need to be responsible for," she says. "Who is seeing this? What's it like for them?" But in galleries and on film, viewers choose to enter Swoon's world. "Now I get to be like, What is beautiful to me? What is sexy to me?"

In one life-size drawing in Cicada, a naked woman sits cross-legged, wearing a strap-on dildo. "I just wanted to make a sexy portrait," Swoon says of the image, a stark departure from her tunic-draped goddesses. "This is without a doubt the first time that I've done that." She thought twice about hanging it up in her studio, where her students would see it. "When I brought back this giant painting of my incredibly hot, sexy friend looking you straight in the eye with her dick out, I was just like, Is this fine?" she says with a laugh.

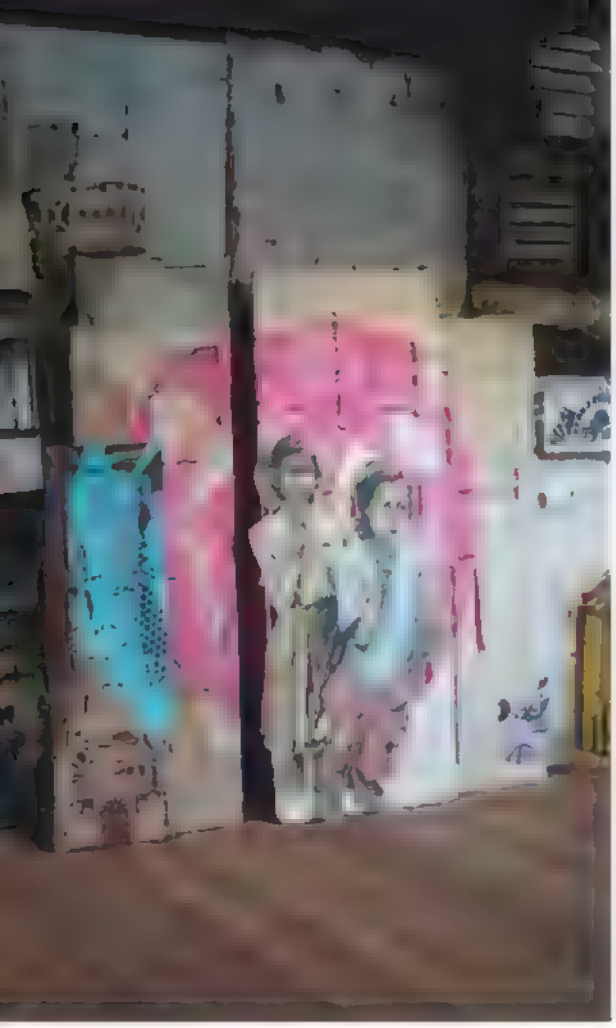
Swoon gestures to another portrait hanging in her studio, a nude drawing of the artist Monica Canilao. "She's been a friend and lover and collaborator for so many years. I always photograph her naked because she's fucking hot, but it's always been part of my private world. This was a moment where I thought, Okay, I'm ready to express some things that I really think are beautiful and sensual and sexy.… I'm a fucking grown-ass woman now. It's time. It's time for me to just own more of myself."

Since Cicada closed in February, Swoon has turned her attention to creating a feature-length animated children's film. It will be based on a fairytale she wrote about her mother's psychotic break. In the Grimm tradition, it may not actually be appropriate for children, she warns.

"I was like, What are you doing, Callie? This is so weird! But you know, sometimes as an artist you just get your marching orders, and you do them."



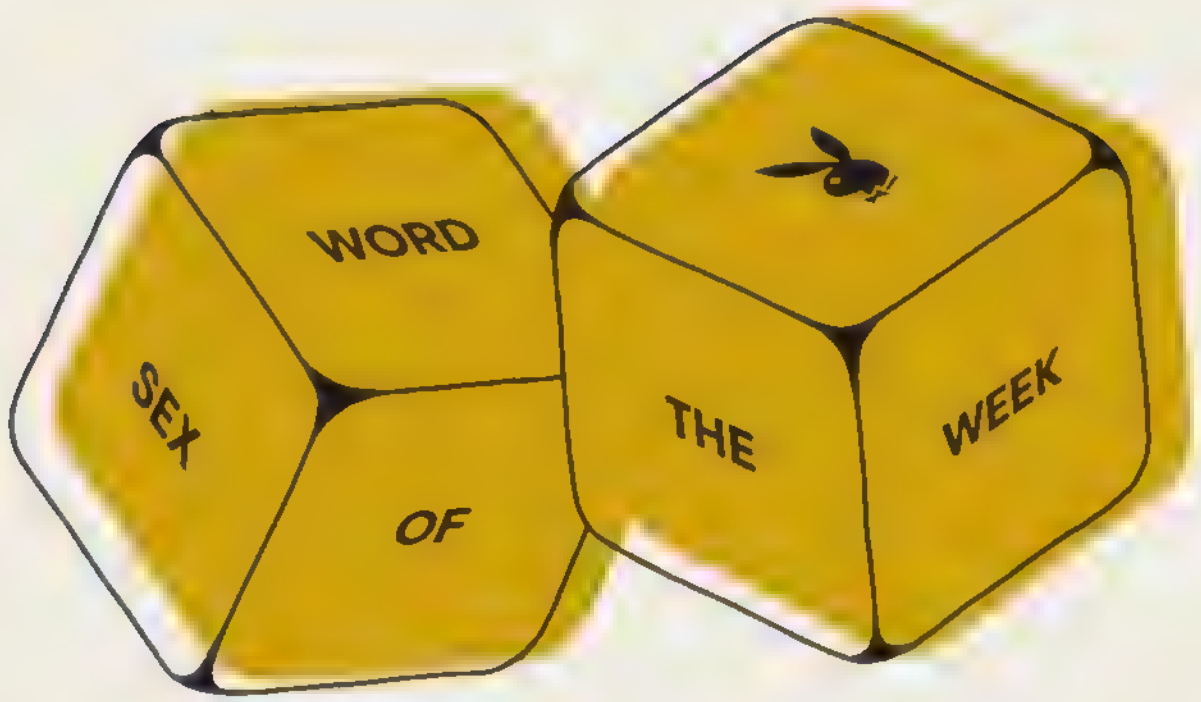
Time Capsule 2019, installation view at Fluctart Paris



Birth 2018 ink drawing on Mylar **Photographed by** *Genevieve Hanson*

Monica Reclining 2020 acrylic paint on canvas

Ameera and Anabella 2014 street paste up



Spinner

WRITTEN BY
ANITA LITTLE

ILLUSTRATION BY
KATIE BAILIE

If your libidinous mind can imagine it, there's probably already a term for it

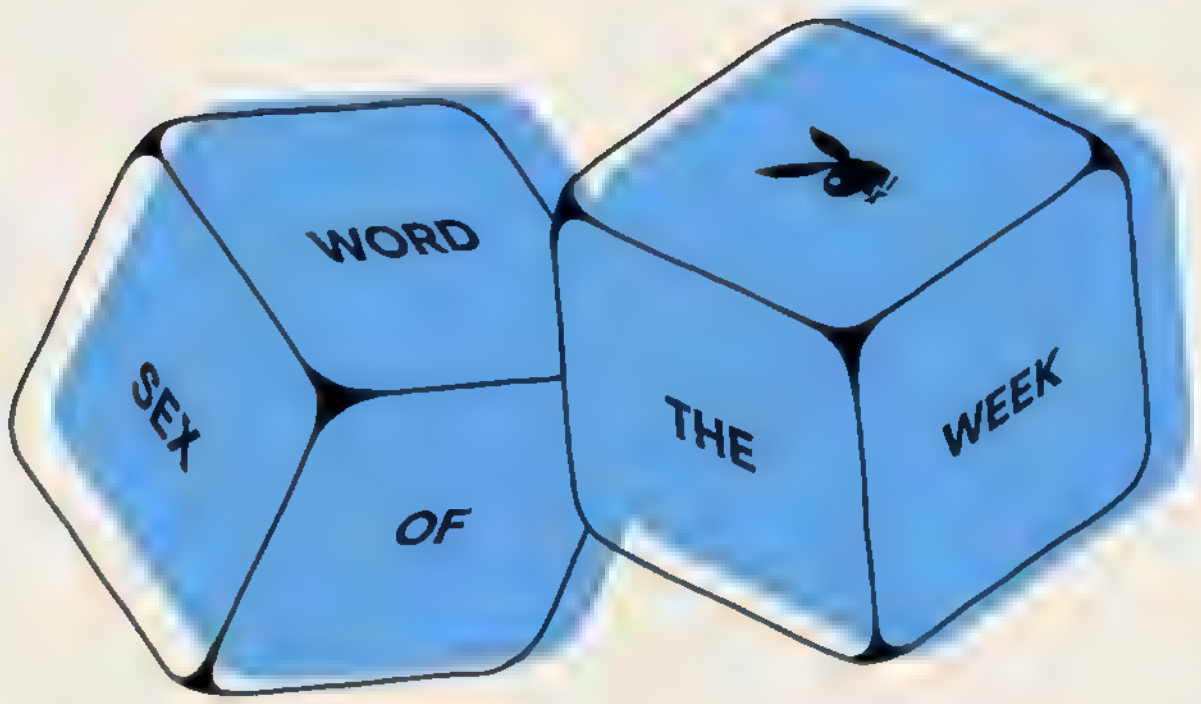
spinner (*n*) in the adult-film industry, a petite woman of exceptional agility

As one of the most beloved spinners in porn, Holly Hendrix was world famous for her gymnast build and dazzling on-screen flexibility.

The lexicon of porn spans a vast laundry list of terms, from *analingus* to *webcam* (remarkably, not even Pornhub offers searches for the letters *x*, *y* or *z*). The comparatively obscure *spinner* refers to women performers who are petite and flexible—traits typically associated with sexual agility. There's no official rule, but to be regarded as a spinner one would typically stand under five-foot-three and weigh in at less than 100 pounds. Picture an Olympic-grade gymnast on a balance beam. That's how spinners are seen in porn: fun-size, graceful and very lithe.

The term has expanded beyond the porn industry and can be used to describe any sexual partner who's small in stature and athletic in her bedroom pursuits. Of course spinner can bring forth the image of a person so miniature they could sit and spin on an erect penis—but please don't actually try this. Serious penile injury could ensue.

The adult world wouldn't be the same without them (nor would the bedrooms of countless lucky couples), so cheers to our masters of spin.



Metamour

WRITTEN BY
ANITA LITTLE

ILLUSTRATION BY
KATIE BAILIE

If your libidinous mind can imagine it, there's probably already a term for it

This week's word is *metamour.*

metamour (*n*) within a polyamorous relationship, one partner's partner with whom one is not romantically involved

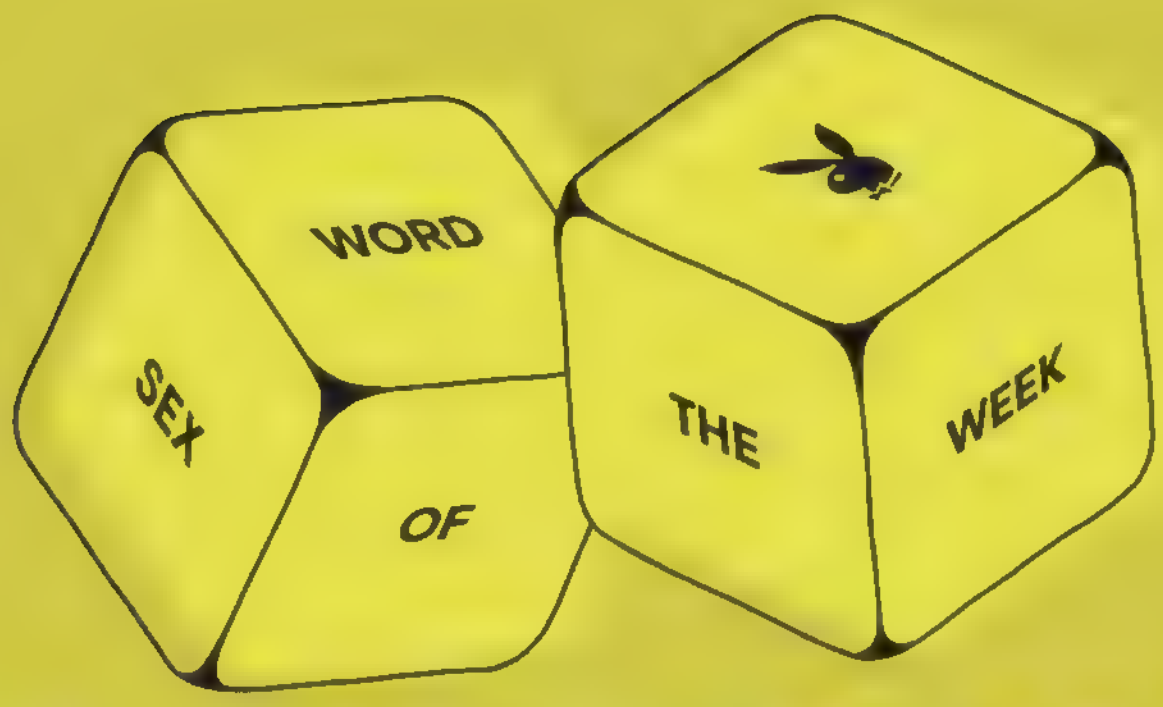
Brendan saw Nick from across the grocery-store aisle and gave him a quick wave, all the while wondering when Nick's next date with Brendan's wife would be; he was forever curious about his metamours.

This week's word comes from the vast terrain of polyamory. To put it simply, a metamour is a partner of your partner with whom you have no romantic relationship. If Brendan and Kara are together, and Kara and Nick are together, but Brendan and Nick are not, then Nick and Brendan are metamours. In a way, this structure stands in contrast to polyfidelity, a form of polyamory in which all members of a group date one another. (If such a group consists of three people, it is known by the relatively familiar term throuple.)

There are countless ways to engage in polyamory; its success depends on communication and boundary-setting, as it does in monogamous relationships. Those who practice polyamory have a range of options when it comes to interacting with metamours. You can get formally introduced, or you and your partner can take a DADT (don't ask, don't tell) approach where no information about metamours is exchanged. Some metamours opt to form fulfilling friendships with one another, building a poly family from their network of metamours.

For those seeking compersion, which is pleasure from witnessing another's pleasure, having a bond with a metamour can be an advantage. Acting in a compersive way could mean watching the kids for a weekend so your partner and metamour can enjoy a romantic getaway or making dinner reservations for the both of them at their favorite restaurant. In other words, it's the opposite of jealousy.

In the end, being able to navigate metamours comes down to the ability to be honest, open and respectful with your partners. It's not for everyone, but when done well, it can lead to heightened relationship satisfaction. Now that's *mour* like it.



Lactophilia

WRITTEN BY
ANITA LITTLE

ILLUSTRATION BY
KATIE BAILIE

If your libidinous mind can imagine it, there's probably already a term for it

lactophilia (*n*) sexual arousal caused by lactating breasts and/or breastfeeding

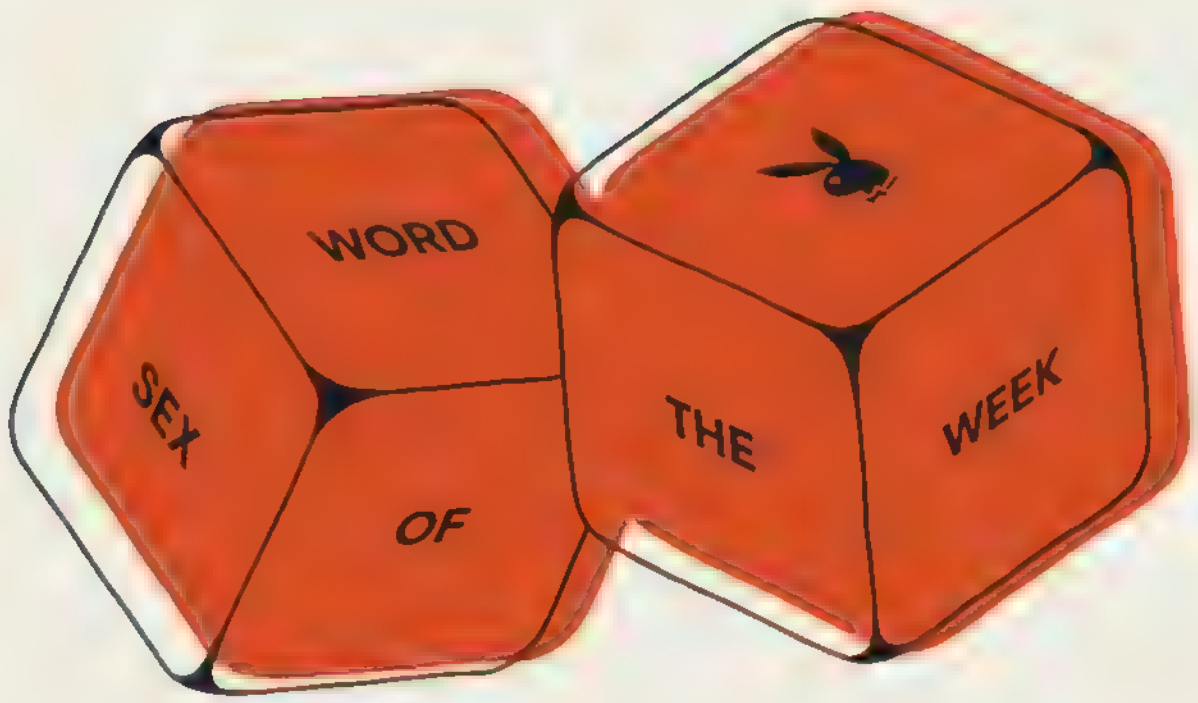
Anna was pumping lunch for her newborn, and the sight aroused her husband so much they ended up having vigorous sex while he sucked both of her breasts dry.

In celebration of Mother's Day on Sunday, this week's word is a nod to the tireless and often thankless work many mothers do in feeding their infants—and the community that's unapologetically turned on by it.

Lactophilia, also known as milk fetishism and erotic lactation, is the basis of ANRs (adult nursing relationships), which consist of a lactating woman and an adult partner who is typically—but not always male. ANRs by nature have to be consistent and long-term: An interruption in nursing could cause the woman to cease producing milk. Breastfeeding can be sexually gratifying for both partners as it's not unheard of for a woman to climax while suckling. This fetish can sometimes accompany but should not be conflated with infantilism (sexual arousal from playing an adult baby) or maieusiophilia (a fetish for pregnant women).

According to a study from sexologist Justin Lehmiller that was previously published on Playboy, a third of 40,000 men surveyed had indulged in erotic fantasies about breast milk at least once. The terms lactation and milk squirt bring forth a bevy of results on PornHub; a wealth of fetish sites focus solely on the genre. And breast milk is a big seller in countries including Japan, where select bars sell the life-giving elixir sometimes even "straight from the tap" for the right price.

Breasts and nipples are already highly eroticized. Lactation fetishists are simply taking an existing desire and milking it for all it's worth.



WRITTEN BY
ANITA LITTLE

ILLUSTRATION BY
KATIE BAILIE

If your libidinous mind can imagine it, there's probably already a term for it

This week's word is *e-stim*.

e-stim (*n*) the practice of applying measured electric currents to the body for the purpose of sexual pleasure

Jackson carefully affixed e-stim nodes onto his partner's labia and watched with pleasure as the small electroshocks pushed her to climax.

It seems like something out of a Frankenstein movie, but this is no horror trope; it's a relatively new and somewhat, uh, shocking way to get off. You know the tingle you feel coursing up and down your spine when you're near that special person? Imagine that but with the addition of actual measurable voltage. That's electrostimulation, also known as electrosex and our word of the week.

You may see these terms and think *ouch*, but when used correctly, e-stim provides a delicate tickling sensation and not the defibrillator jolt one might imagine. Our nervous systems are already made up of electric currents; electrosex simply taps into them.

E-stim can be very involved, including clamps for nipples and labia, vaginal probes, electrified cock rings and butt plugs—and if you're dedicated, you can invest in an e-stim kit that often includes a power box and sticky pads with electrodes.

A rule of thumb for beginners: Keep all electric activity below the waist and away from your heart to avoid disturbing its natural rhythm. Nipple play should be reserved for experienced "stimmers."

How did humanity discover the low-voltage joy of e-stim? It grew out of the "medfet," or medical fetish, community, and the technology had existed for decades before being repurposed for a kinkier use. Today's e-stim kit evolved from the medical TENS (transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation) unit that uses electric currents to target muscle pain. Now it generates a completely different kind of buzz.

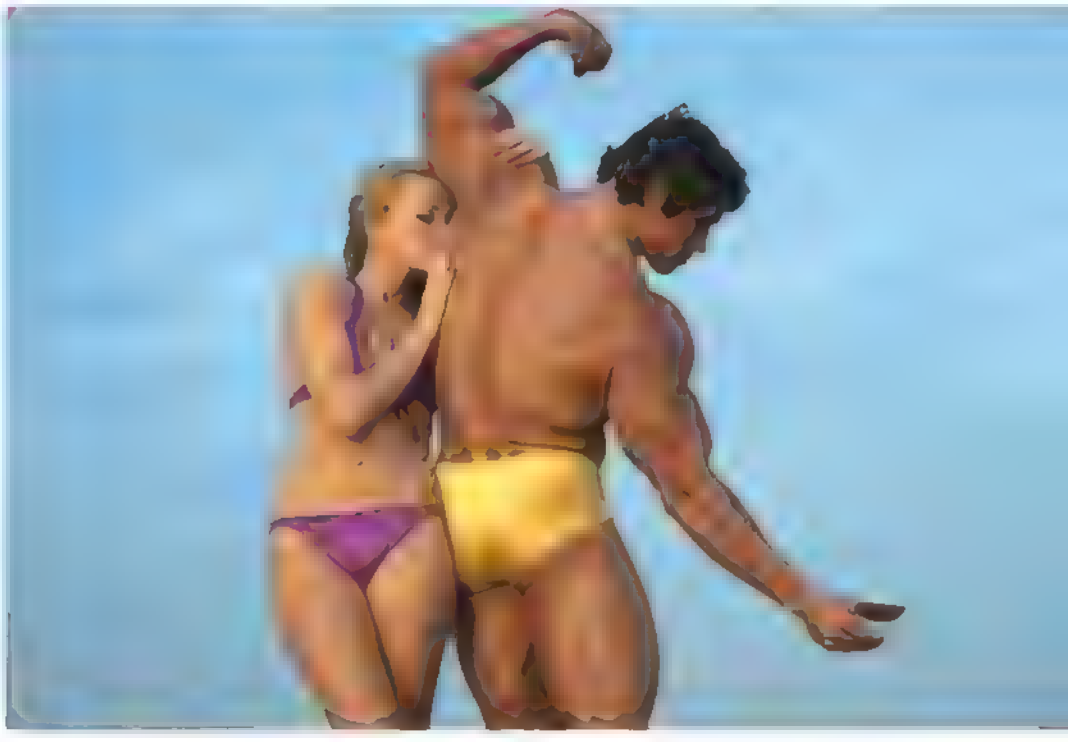
PLAYBACK

PHOTOGRAPHED BY
THE PLAYBOY ARCHIVES

Snapshots from our history courtesy of the Playboy Archives

A young Arnold Schwarzenegger grips a snifter of California brandy as model and actor Joyce Mandel grips him. Photographer Mario Casilli captured the pair for It's a Native Little California Brandy, an article by food writer Emanuel Greenberg about the growing popularity of the Golden State's version of the French spirit. An accomplished bodybuilder but not yet the cultural heavyweight he is today, in 1975 the future governor of California was already a five-time Mr. Olympia winner. Two years after his PLAYBOY shoot, he spoke candidly about sex and bodybuilding with the magazine's sister publication Oui while promoting the documentary Pumping Iron. "We had girls backstage giving head, then all of us went out and I won," he said. "It didn't bother me at all, in fact, I went out there feeling like King Kong." Check out Greenberg's take on delicious California brandies, including classic cocktail recipes, at iPlayboy.com—where you can also read the January 1988 Playboy Interview with Schwarzenegger.

CALIFORNIA, 1975



PLAYBACK

PHOTOGRAPHED BY
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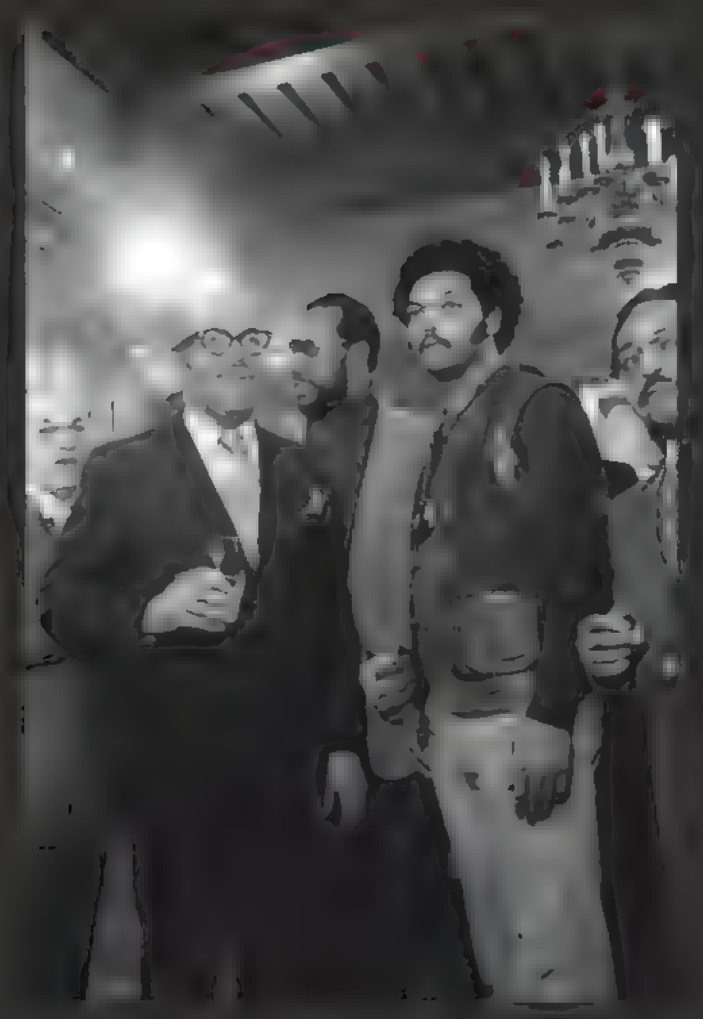


CHICAGO, 1972

Civil rights legends (from left) T.R.M. Howard, Thomas Todd, Jesse Jackson and Cecil Hale attend a PUSH event at Hugh Hefner's original Playboy Mansion. Jackson had founded PUSH, or People United to Serve Humanity, in 1971. Jackson and Hefner remained friends across the decades. After Hefner's September 2017 death, Jackson wrote about him for PLAYBOY's 2017 special tribute edition celebrating the life of the legendary magazine founder. "When Hugh Hefner's light passed through the prism of my life, what I saw was a powerful ray of support for racial and social justice around the world," Jackson wrote. "Hefner brought people together from all walks of life to talk and to learn from each other. He did so much to illuminate the darkness." Jackson was the subject of the renowned Playboy interview in November 1969 and again in June 1984; to read both, visit Playboy.com

TAYLER
MERCIER
Independent, Sensual & Romantic.
Model @TAYLERELAINE
Photography by NINO BATISTA | @NINOBATISTA

Describe yourself in three words.
Independent, sensual, romantic.

Were you excited to shoot for Playboy?
This is a very exciting time for me. It's an honor and a privilege to work with Playboy. I'm a Texas girl at heart and it is my love for travel that makes this international Cover so very special.

Why did you choose to pursue a career in modeling?
I have always loved fashion and glamour and this was my way of expressing that interest.

What are some of your hobbies?
Traveling, spending time with my friends and family and my dogs, decorating, shopping, singing in the car, going to the gym.

Describe your perfect day off.
That's easy. Staying in bed all day in my pajamas.

Name three things on your bucket list.
For me this would be three places I have to visit. Italy, France and Greece.

Do you feel more like a city person or a country person?
I am definitely a country girl at heart. I grew up in a small town so my heart will always be in the country but day to day I live a city girls' life.

What inspires you?
Original deep thought is very inspirational to me, sale-made success, and love for family and friends inspires me to be a better version of myself.

Tell us something surprising about you.
I am a Huge animal lover. Dogs and horses have my heart.

Describe to us your perfect date.
Dinner by candlelight and a full body massage with soft music in the background.

Turn-ons
Someone who makes me laugh is my biggest turn on. Honesty is A must. Someone who challenges me intellectually.

Turn-offs
Arrogance - If someone goes out of their way to appear important that is not a good sign for me.

Chauvinists - Anyone not looking for an equal partner is a no go for me.

Liars - They must be honest with integrity.

What is your personal Mantra?
Live a great story. Something exciting. Give them something to remember and talk about.

Any last words for our readers?
I would like to take this opportunity to say thank you to all of my fans and followers for all of their love and support. I would not be here if it were not for them. All of this is because of them and I do it for them. They truly mean so much to me. And don't forget to check out my fanpages at:

OnlyFans @merciertayler
Facebook @TaylerMercier and
TikTok @taylerelaine

Playboy Interview

Scarlett Johansson

A candid conversation with the stratospheric star about motherhood, monogamy and why she keeps playing lethal superwomen

INTERVIEW BY **AMANDA PETRUSICH** PHOTOGRAPHY BY **JAKE CHESSUM**

The opening sequence of Lost in Translation, Sofia Coppola's 2003 film about two spiritually adrift, jet-lagged Americans finding each other in Tokyo, features a sustained shot of Scarlett Johansson's behind, swaddled in a pair of nearly translucent pink underwear, as she lies on a bed, gazing at a window with the curtains drawn.

Johansson plays Charlotte, a recent college graduate lamenting the trajectory of her life from inside an opulent Japanese hotel; the actress was just 17 when she landed the role. Although she had already been working for almost a decade, her quiet, deliberate performance turned her into one of Hollywood's most sought-after actresses, and in the 14 years since *Lost in Translation* was released, she has served as a muse to auteurs including Woody Allen and the Coen brothers and propped up massive commercial franchises such as *Captain America* and *The Avengers*. Her creative choices have been vast and varied, a mix of blockbusters and art-house experiments: a computer operating system in Spike Jonze's Her (a character she gave life to using only that dusky, twilight voice), a 17th century servant to the painter Johannes Vermeer in *Girl With a Pearl Earring*, the girlfriend of a porn addict in *Don Jon*.

Hollywood has a strange relationship to certain libidinous energies, and Johansson is compared often and aptly to Marilyn Monroe: The fact of her body seems to supersede everything else. But Johansson is bored by discussions of her physicality, and while Monroe was never quite able to fully steer her own sexuality, Johansson is remarkably self-possessed. To ask her about her good looks is to watch her grow increasingly disinterested. In the past decade, she's also chosen roles—an unnamed, homicidal alien in Jonathan Glazer's Under the Skin; Black Widow, an unforgiving superspy, in the Avengers films; a drug mule who turns superhuman in Luc Besson's Lucy — in which her sexuality is weaponized. Men underestimate her and are punished for it.

Her latest part is Major Motoko Kusanagi in a live-action adaptation of Ghost in the Shell, Mamoru Oshii's beloved 1995 manga film. In Oshii's version, the Major is Japanese, and when Johansson's casting was announced, critics immediately cried whitewashing. Johansson was born in New York City, in 1984, to a Jewish mother from the Bronx and a father from Denmark, and while she is quick to acknowledge Hollywood's grim diversity problem, she is hopeful that the film, directed by Rupert Sanders and shot in New Zealand and Hong Kong, will resolve any questions about the Major's actual origins.

The New Yorker's Amanda Petrusich first connected with Johansson in a cavernous photo studio on the west side of Manhattan. Two weeks after their initial conversation, Johansson would speak at the Women's March on Washington, voicing her firm support for women's reproductive rights. At one point she addressed the new president directly, saying that her daughter "may potentially not have the right to make choices for her body and her future that your daughter Ivanka has been privileged to have." But on this blustery afternoon just days into the new year, writer and subject found an overstuffed leather couch, commandeered a plate of chocolate chip cookies and spoke about Johansson's childhood, career and new life as a mother — she has a two-year-old daughter with French advertising executive Romain Dauriac. (They were wed in 2014, three years after the end of Johansson's brief and high-profile marriage to Ryan Reynolds.)

"She's frank and funny and forthright — a kind of tough-talking New York girl," Petrusich says. "She's also deeply uninterested in bullshit. There's a sense, speaking with her, that you need to be ready to go hard or you'll lose her interest. It immediately made sense to me that Sofia Coppola cast her as a corrective to the bubbly blonde starlet played by Anna Faris in Lost in Translation. She's a deep and naturally contemplative person — with a gaze that draws you in even as it commands you to keep up."

PLAYBOY: You were born and raised in New York City. What was it like to grow up here?

JOHANSSON: New York was different then. That makes me sound like an old geezer, but the city was much more accessible. My group of friends was really diverse. We all came from different socioeconomic backgrounds, and our parents did different things. Some parents were drug dealers, some were working in finance, and we all lived in the same community. While it's still probably the greatest city in the world — I'm biased—I think it used to feel like more was possible here for more people. There's a great leather store down in the West Village that has been there forever. I was there a couple of months ago, and the guy who has been making sandals since 1967 or whatever is fighting his landlord to stay in that space, because it was once rent stabilized and that doesn't exist anymore. In the next couple of years it will probably turn into some corporate business. It's sad, because that's the heartbeat of New York. That's what drove the city, what made things seem possible.

PLAYBOY: Almost everyone I know who grew up in New York City has this lovely quality — not just being exposed to all the different artists working around you but, inevitably, to all these different ways of being, ways of living, ways of seeing the world.

JOHANSSON: And you can be yourself here, or whatever version of yourself you want to be. That's not possible in a lot of other places. I love the idea of raising my daughter here. She's probably exposed to so many more things just going to the playground than almost any other toddler her age growing up in a lot of other places.

PLAYBOY: You had your daughter in 2015?

JOHANSSON: What year are we in? No, 2014 — I can't even remember. [*laughs*] She's two and a half now.

PLAYBOY: Do you think motherhood has changed you?

JOHANSSON: Oh, it has changed me, yes. Just the process of being pregnant and giving birth was incredibly profound. Also surrendering to the fact that with babies, and particularly infants and toddlers, you have to let go of your expectations and of whatever instincts you have to take control of the situation. Of course, being a mother, you have to make decisions all the time that affect this person who is completely dependent on you, but you also have to surrender to the experience, and that in itself is really liberating. For me, it's the best thing that has ever happened. Ever. Somebody once described it to me as your heart growing this other chamber, and I think that's really profoundly true. Your capacity to love something, at least in my experience, deepens to a whole other space. I think I

was afraid that life would change, and it does; it dramatically changes. But I feel in a lot of ways more myself now than I did before.

PLAYBOY: That's a beautiful way of talking about it.

JOHANSSON: I understand the importance of my own happiness now more than I did before. Because you see how it affects somebody else, and you're kind of like, If I'm not happy, then I can't be in tip-top shape for this other person.

PLAYBOY: This question is asked incessantly of women and very rarely asked of working fathers, but do you feel parenthood has changed the way you approach your work?

JOHANSSON: Where I want to be working is definitely something. That's just a practical part of it, though I'm fortunately at a place in my career, after 20-whatever years, where I can dictate that a little bit. It will probably get more challenging as she gets older, once she's in school and her life is more established in one place. It's a struggle for a lot of people, because we exist in this weird nomadic industry where almost everybody on a crew has a family, and it's hard. It's hard on relationships; it's hard on your partner, your kids, family in general, friends.

PLAYBOY: Has that been a challenge for you?

JOHANSSON: When I was doing Ghost in the Shell, I was in New Zealand with our daughter for six months. It was so hard: The distance and the weight of the job itself were really hard on me. It was a big movie with a lot happening. I spent all day fighting people—and literally fighting with myself. I was battling with the character. I remember saying to Rupert Sanders several times, "Can one good thing happen to this character? One great moment?" The answer was no. Spoiler alert: It's a fuckin' dark ride for this person, or cyborg or whatever.

PLAYBOY: There was some controversy about your casting as the Major. She's a character a lot of people presumed would be Japanese and therefore would be played by a Japanese actor. Did those conversations trickle down to you?

JOHANSSON: Totally. I think the conversation about diversity in Hollywood is an important one and one that we should be having. My character has the unique experience of being a person whose human brain has been put into what was essentially a synthetic robotic body. I guess I always thought the character was a universal one, in the sense that she has no identity, and the heart of this story is her search for an identity. I hope that whatever questions people have about my casting in this film will be answered by actually seeing the movie. It's hard to say, because you haven't seen the movie yet, and there's a part of it that I don't want to talk about because it's the turning point of the movie, but I think it answers the question for the audience as to who I am, who I was and what my true identity is, and it has nothing to do with how my character looks or how you see me.

PLAYBOY: On a more personal level, there's also the challenge of disappearing into another person, or disappearing into the project itself, and having to forcibly disconnect from the people around you. It's not a burden that can be shared.

JOHANSSON: Totally, because oftentimes you don't even really know where within you it's coming from. I think that's part of the beauty of the job. What I'm more and more curious about, and more confident in exploring, are all these weird spaces within ourselves, these little nooks and crannies, things that at one time seemed embarrassing to try. When you realize the freedom you feel when you unlock that, and when you're able to get weird and take up lots of space emotionally and then pull back if you can do that within a single performance, it's a transformative experience.

PLAYBOY: Let's talk about your family. Your father is Danish and your mother is from the Bronx. What kind of parents were they?

JOHANSSON: After having two kids and then trying for a third and getting two more—I have a twin brother, and we were the last I think they surrendered whatever rule book they had been following, if any. That's probably normal. By the time you get to your younger kids, you're more lax, you worry over fewer things, you're more comfortable as a parent. I think my brother and I probably benefited from that in some ways and didn't in others. My mom had moved to California and was kind of remotely there, and my dad was consumed by the responsibility of being at home with us and all that it meant to provide for us. My parents always struggled financially, so that was a huge burden for him. By the time we were 13, my brother and I were almost raising ourselves. I was still living at home and going to school and stuff, but I was working, and New York is—I was out and about and hanging out and getting into trouble pretty early on. Not too much trouble, thankfully. I self-regulated, but I could have probably gone really far down the rabbit hole had I not always had something guiding me.

PLAYBOY: What do you think that was? Work?

JOHANSSON: Yeah. I had a good work ethic. I had my own sense of self-preservation, and I made it to graduation and got my own place when I was 18.

PLAYBOY: What about dating at that age anything you know now that you wish you'd known in your early 20s?

JOHANSSON: I never dated anyone, so I'm a bad person to ask for advice. I did go on one blind date, and when I arrived, my date had already taken a shot of tequila in his eye. I didn't even know that was possible. What a turnoff. I would never want to be in my early 20s again, though I did a lot of fun stuff. I wish I knew that everything changes and that nothing is forever except death. It probably would've freed up a lot of space in my brain.

PLAYBOY: What did your father do for a living?

JOHANSSON: My dad was an architect.

PLAYBOY: And your mom?

JOHANSSON: My mom started managing me when I was about eight or nine. She was kind of overseeing things prior to that, but she really started managing me when I was around that age—or maybe a little bit older, like 12. She did that until I stopped working with her when I was in my early 20s. My mom is very ambitious, and she's also good at multitasking. She has a lot of life force, my mom. I definitely inherited that from her. My dad is more—I don't know, I think my dad in a lot of ways is kind of a dreamer. He's such a creative person, but at times I think he can almost be self-limiting.

"I'm ambitious, I guess. If I see something in the distance and I want it, I'll sprint toward it."

Whereas my mom, I think, always saw a bigger picture, and I probably got that from her.

PLAYBOY: How was he self-limiting?

JOHANSSON: I think he didn't have as much confidence. He had a complicated relationship with his father. Even though he could dream big, he never had the confidence to push the boundaries. And my mom, when I was growing up, always told me—told all of us, actually—that if we wanted something we had to go and get it for ourselves and that nobody would do it for us. That really stuck with me. Though I think I'm a little bit more forgiving than that. I probably work better in a team than she does, and I really appreciate the collaborative spirit. I think part of that is from working on productions for such a long time and seeing how one hand holds the other and how important it is to have a healthy morale within a group of people in a professional setting. I'm ambitious, I guess. If I see something in the distance and I want it, I'll sprint toward it.

PLAYBOY: I would think there might be something advantageous about coming into your own as an artist relatively early, because there's a self-confidence or self-possession we all have as children that just gets chipped away the longer you exist in the world.

JOHANSSON: Yeah, I think that's interesting. You go to high school and then you go to college and then you're about to graduate and you go, "Well, I don't want to do this." And then you're interning somewhere, and it's not something you really want to do. You don't really have any work experience; you haven't had this kind of time in the field. And then you go back to graduate school for something else, because you realize that you need a master's degree to do whatever it is you decided you want to do, and then, you know, people get married and have kids, and life just takes a different path. I think when you work from a young age, you have time to hone—craft is such a crappy word, but it's true. You hone a craft and things get pared away. You cut the fat away earlier on, and you're more focused on what is within that's actually driving you.

"We are talking about normalizing what is by definition a normal thing: the accessibility of women's health care. Everyone with a vagina needs it.

PLAYBOY: It's such a gift to know what you want.

JOHANSSON: It's true. Otherwise, you get suffocated by the possibilities. I think that's what happens. Everything is possible, especially in this country. We're so spoiled that way—sometimes too much is possible, and that's why people panic. They don't want to fail at anything, so they just stop. They stop reaching.

PLAYBOY: That's a very American idea, the fear of failure. We prize success above all else. There's no power in admitting fault or failure or uncertainty.

JOHANSSON: It's something Barack Obama has—humility. It's such a lovely quality. There are a lot of things about him that will be missed, but humility is such an important part of being successful at what you do.

PLAYBOY: And being able to learn.

JOHANSSON: I actually think it will become very apparent that a leader cannot be successful if they don't have that—if they're not able to be vulnerable, curious, compassionate, to have that kind of humility. I don't think you can lead in any field without having those qualities. That's what makes a leader, I think: the ability to learn from mistakes and to have compassion for your fellow man.

PLAYBOY: You campaigned for Barack Obama twice and supported Hillary Clinton in the recent election. How have you been coping with recent events?

JOHANSSON: You know, it's funny. I had dinner with Woody Allen right after the election, so it was in November. We were both like, "Okay, the election. That's our topic before we get deep into what the meaning of life is." And I said, "Please don't tell me you're one of those people who was like, 'I told you so.' Please don't tell me that." And he was like, "Honestly, I was shocked. I would have thought that he would not have won one state." And I thought, Okay, well, if Woody felt that way, it makes me feel better about being as ignorant as I was, because I literally—I mean, it was a complete and utter shock. I had a very strange experience voting. I took my kid with me, and I was like, "Kid, we got a female president, which is pretty exciting. And it's Hillary Clinton; that's also cool, and we're good." Then I got on a plane to Hong Kong, which is a 16-hour flight. I had two glasses of wine and passed out. I woke up 10 hours later, and the stewardess was like, "Excuse me, Miss, would you like to know the election results?" I looked at her and said, "Well, I know it's—okay, what? Give me the news. Let me have it. What is it? I think I know it's Clinton." And she was like, "No, it's actually Trump." I thought, This is a Twilight Zone episode.

PLAYBOY: You thought she was kidding.

JOHANSSON: I mean, I'm shuttling through the air at 30,000 feet. The whole cabin is dark, my brother is passed out, and I tap him on the shoulder—he was a field organizer for Obama; he's very political—and I say, "Hunter, wake up, wake up!" He was like, "What?" I said, "Trump won." He was like, "Oh, stop it." God, he got so drunk when we landed in Hong Kong. This morning I was listening to NPR, and I have these moments when it still hits me, the weight of it.

PLAYBOY: Tell me about your experience at the Women's March on Washington.

JOHANSSON: As you know, I'm not one to overshare, but I felt very driven to say what I had to say. It was both a grounding experience and an out-of-body one. Paradoxical, I guess. I always took Planned Parenthood for granted growing up. That's how it should be, right? We are talking about normalizing what is by definition a normal thing: the accessibility of women's health care. Everyone with a vagina needs it. Why are we still having these conversations so many years after we, as women, were supposedly "liberated"? I'm over it.

PLAYBOY: Are there things you do to manage feelings of hopelessness or fear?

JOHANSSON: Well, one thing you just can't be complacent. I think it's hard because people have been inactive for such a long time, and we don't have a draft. Not that I'm advocating for that, but if there were some kind of mandatory service, I think it would be a completely different political climate. People would be much more proactive—not just opinionated but proactive. It's hard to mobilize people when they don't feel I mean, look at this past election: Nobody voted. There was a record low turnout. I blame the media for a lot of that too. Early polling results and that stuff should just be banned. I think people just got complacent. They were like, "Who cares?"

PLAYBOY: That leads me to a tangent about music. You're a singer as well as an actor, and you've made two records. In 2008 you released Anywhere I Lay My Head, a collection of covers of Tom Waits songs. As we're speaking of America writ large, it occurs to me that Waits is one of our best representative voices—on his records he becomes a vital, exciting and endearing embodiment of this place. Tell me about your relationship to his work.

JOHANSSON: He's a true poet. And he's an artist in that most delicious way, where his self-expression gives us a place to be reflective. Rhino came to me to do an album. I mean, who has that opportunity? It was amazing. I was overwhelmed. I thought, Maybe I'll do classics, maybe I'll do Cole Porter songs. Then I was like, I really want to do that duet Tom Waits does with Bette Midler called "I Never Talk to Strangers." And then I thought, Maybe I'll just reimagine Tom Waits songs and see where that leads me. I tried doing it with various producers, and it just was not working. That's when I got, very fatefully, to Dave Sitek from TV on the Radio. He had this Tinkerbell-cough-syrup idea for the album, and so we just ran with it. Meeting Dave was life-changing because he became a really important figure in my life and a dear, dear friend. And going to Louisiana to record was an absolutely epic experience. I was falling in love with my first husband at the time. It was just a very romantic and really liberating time. It was great.

PLAYBOY: That sounds incredible.

JOHANSSON: It was wonderful

PLAYBOY: Another interesting thing about Waits's work is that so much of it is about his particular, singular performance of those songs. But because of that, I feel there's a lot of meat left on the bone, in a way, for a different singer to come in and totally reimagine them.

JOHANSSON: Yeah, it's true. It's funny because if you try to recreate the song as Waits did it, you realize he actually has a very classical approach. I'm not talking about the really experimental stuff that he does, but the instrumental parts of his songs can be very sentimental. It's his voice that gives them such depth

PLAYBOY: You and Dave got in a car and drove together from California to Louisiana.

JOHANSSON: Yeah, it was crazy, because we didn't know each other at all, and we figured we would get to know each other on this road trip. I think I drove.

PLAYBOY: That's so high-stakes!

JOHANSSON: I remember picking him up in Silver Lake or whatever, and he had seven cigarettes in each hand, a cup of black coffee and a bunch of weird instruments I had never heard of, and we just loaded up the trunk and here we go. We drove into the desert and smoked a bunch of pot and got weird. We just sat on the hood of the car and stared into the sunset.

PLAYBOY: You mentioned Waits being one of our great poets. Were you pleased when Bob Dylan won the Nobel Prize for literature?

JOHANSSON: Yeah, that was cool. I love that he didn't show up too. That's very Dylanesque. Dylan is someone you can revisit at different times in your life and his songs mean something different to you at each stage. He's a wonderful artist and poet and a mysterious magician.

PLAYBOY: You starred in one of his music videos.

JOHANSSON: My friend Bennett Miller was asked to direct a video for him. I was going to do it with Dylan, and then he didn't want to be in the video, so we just kind of did our own thing. About two years later, I went to see Dylan for the first time. I saw him backstage, and he said something to me like "Oh yeah, thanks for the video you did." I expected when we did the video that he would come at us, that I would hear from him no, not at all. He just kind of remembered it on the fly, like, Oh yeah, you did that video for me. It was my pleasure, Mr. Dylan. My friend told me this hysterical story about how a friend of theirs, a music producer, was like, "I'm bringing a friend to dinner," and it was Dylan, which is crazy. Dylan was wearing a hoodie, and he had pulled the string so only his eyes and nose were showing. And he sat through the entire dinner like that. He kept having to pull his hoodie down so he could shove forkfuls of food into his mouth.

PLAYBOY: God bless him. Your second record, Break Up, was a collaboration with Pete Yorn, who has said that he was inspired by Serge Gainsbourg's recordings with Brigitte Bardot. Is the duet format something that appeals to you?

JOHANSSON: Yeah, duets are great. When I was a kid I listened to Louis Armstrong, Ella Fitzgerald, Dean Martin with various singers, the Andrews Sisters. I think I particularly like to hear a male and a female voice together. Pete was like, "Hey, want to make an album?" I think he was in a dark place, or a transitional place in his life, and he had a dream that we made an album together, so he texted me when he came out of his fever dream, and that's how we decided to make it.

PLAYBOY: The record does have a dreamy quality there's an ache to it. Do you remember your dreams?

JOHANSSON: I do, yeah

PLAYBOY: Any recurring anxiety dreams?

JOHANSSON: I only have anxiety dreams! I once told my mother that and she cried. I have a lot of dreams about houses—beautiful, ancient houses filled with gardens and hanging vines that I at one time had the opportunity to live in but sold. Whatever. I'm sure the heating bills would have been outrageous.

PLAYBOY: I think part of getting older is reckoning with that idea that there's so much we don't know and might never know about ourselves. Dreams are the most immediate way to glimpse those weird, vast expanses of your subconscious that you can't otherwise access.

JOHANSSON: It's true. Of course, because you have all these barriers that shut you down from I mean, I think it's probably a survival thing that you go about your day and remember glimpses of dreams that you've had. I think examining your dreams can really help you to be more present in your waking life, because then you know better what's going on with you.

PLAYBOY: Every once in a while someone will do you a great service by saying something revelatory to you, about you and of course you're like, "Fuck you, you don't know me." Then you go home and think about it and you're like, Oh my God, they're exactly right.

JOHANSSON: I was listening to this TED Talk about relation-

ships, and the person who was giving the talk was saying that in moments when you're starting a new relationship and your friends and family say, "No, this is a red flag. This person is not for you" why do we ignore those people who know us so well in the moments that we don't? And then we distance ourselves from them because we're embarrassed or whatever. It's interesting how sometimes all you need is your good friend to tell you that you're not acting like yourself. Or that they see something in front of you that is not beneficial for you or true to who you actually are. I don't know. It's so easy to just go, "No, I don't want to hear that."

PLAYBOY: Well, love is so deeply intoxicating at first. You're just out of your mind.

JOHANSSON: Of course.

PLAYBOY: No one can tell you anything.

JOHANSSON: And the part of your brain that functions then is a dysfunctional part—it's not the rational side of your brain. It's the addictive part of your brain that fires up when you have those first feelings of love, and it's so good.

PLAYBOY: You've said that you aren't sure humans are designed to be monogamous.

JOHANSSON: Well, with every gain there's a loss, right? So that's a loss. You have to choose a path. I think the idea of marriage is very romantic; it's a beautiful idea, and the practice of it can be a very beautiful thing. I don't think it's natural to be a monogamous person. I might be skewered for that, but I think it's work. It's a lot of work. And the fact that it is such work for so many people—for everyone—the fact of that proves that it is not a natural thing. It's something I have a lot of respect for and have participated in, but I think it definitely goes against some instinct to look beyond.

PLAYBOY: And of course many marriages don't work out.

JOHANSSON: I think marriage initially involves a lot of people who have nothing to do with your relationship, because it's a legally binding contract, and that has a weight to it. Being married is different than not being married, and anybody who tells you that it's the same is lying. It changes things. I have friends who were together for 10 years and then decided to get married, and I'll ask them on their wedding day or right after if it's different, and it always is. It is. It's a beautiful responsibility, but it's a responsibility.

PLAYBOY: You were married for the second time in 2014. Did you wake up the next morning and feel different?

JOHANSSON: Yeah, definitely. It felt different. I had a really young baby at the time, so that also—our family dynamic was just different. I don't know. Whatever that is, the thing you can't fully put words to, it changed.

PLAYBOY: And it felt different from your prior marriage too?

JOHANSSON: Yeah, of course. I had a baby, and also my husband was coming from another country and becoming a citizen of this country. It was a huge transition for both of us, and certainly for him moving here, committing to the States. But I think my husband has embraced America, and New York in particular, in this really endearing way. He was making meatballs the other night, actually. I wasn't home. I was away, and he sent me a picture. He was like, "I'm a real New Yorker, and I love The Sopranos!" I was just, "You go, babe."

PLAYBOY: Are you based in New York now, or are you still moving back and forth between here and Paris?

JOHANSSON: We still mix it up. My job takes me all over the place, so I don't even know where I live, but I guess now we're kind of committed to living here because with our daughter we have to commit to someplace. She'll be in school in a hot minute. The time passes like crazy.

PLAYBOY: What do you think you'd be doing if you weren't acting?

JOHANSSON: Oh gosh, I don't know. I probably would have gone into some kind of medical profession. I'd be rooting around in somebody else! I'm interested in people.

PLAYBOY: They're such different disciplines, but they both rely on a kind of intuition.

JOHANSSON: I could have been a dermatologist. I would have actually loved being a dermatologist. That's a dream job. All my friends are like, "What is this weird thing on me?" And I'm like, "Let me see it!" But I don't think I could do seven years of schooling.

PLAYBOY: I'm also not sure that Hollywood would let you go so easily.

JOHANSSON: Oh, I don't know. There's always someone else to fill the void.

PLAYBOY: I read recently that you were the highest-grossing actor of 2016.

JOHANSSON: I make a lot of movies that have a huge built-in audience, and that drives a lot of it. But it's been a very productive few years

PLAYBOY: Surveying your body of work, there's an interesting mix of independent, idiosyncratic films and then these intensely commercial franchise movies. Do you try to keep those things in balance?

JOHANSSON: I always hoped to have that balance, and I've finally achieved it. I loved what Jon Favreau did with Iron Man, how he worked with actors like Robert Downey, who I've loved for such a long time. I'm not normally a comic book fan. I liked the Tim Burton Batman movies, but it's not my genre. Yet Favreau seemed to find this balance that you're talking about an independent creative spirit with the budget of something so ambitious. It was unprecedented. It was a new way of telling that story. And it obviously rang true, because then DC and studios like Warner Bros. started doing it too. Look at the Suicide Squad cast we've seen Will Smith in these blockbusters, but casting somebody like Jared Leto as the Joker? It's a really welcome trend, I think

PLAYBOY: Do you read reviews of your films or interviews with you in magazines?

JOHANSSON: Yeah, I do. I do read reviews and interviews. I

"I don't think it's natural to be a monogamous person. I might be skewered for that, but I think it's work."

don't search high and low for reviews, but The New York Times, the trades—I'm curious about that stuff. It's helpful, and I like to participate in the process that way. I will always have my own opinion about something that I'm doing, not necessarily of my own performance but of the film in general. And it's probably similar to whatever your response was at the time! Good or bad. I'm like, "Yup, I didn't expect it to suck either." There have been very few times when I did something I loved and nobody else liked it. Most of the time I'm like, "Yeah…."

PLAYBOY: Filmmaking is so collaborative. There are so many moving parts, and you're often just one of them. I imagine it must be heartbreaking when you see something you've made——

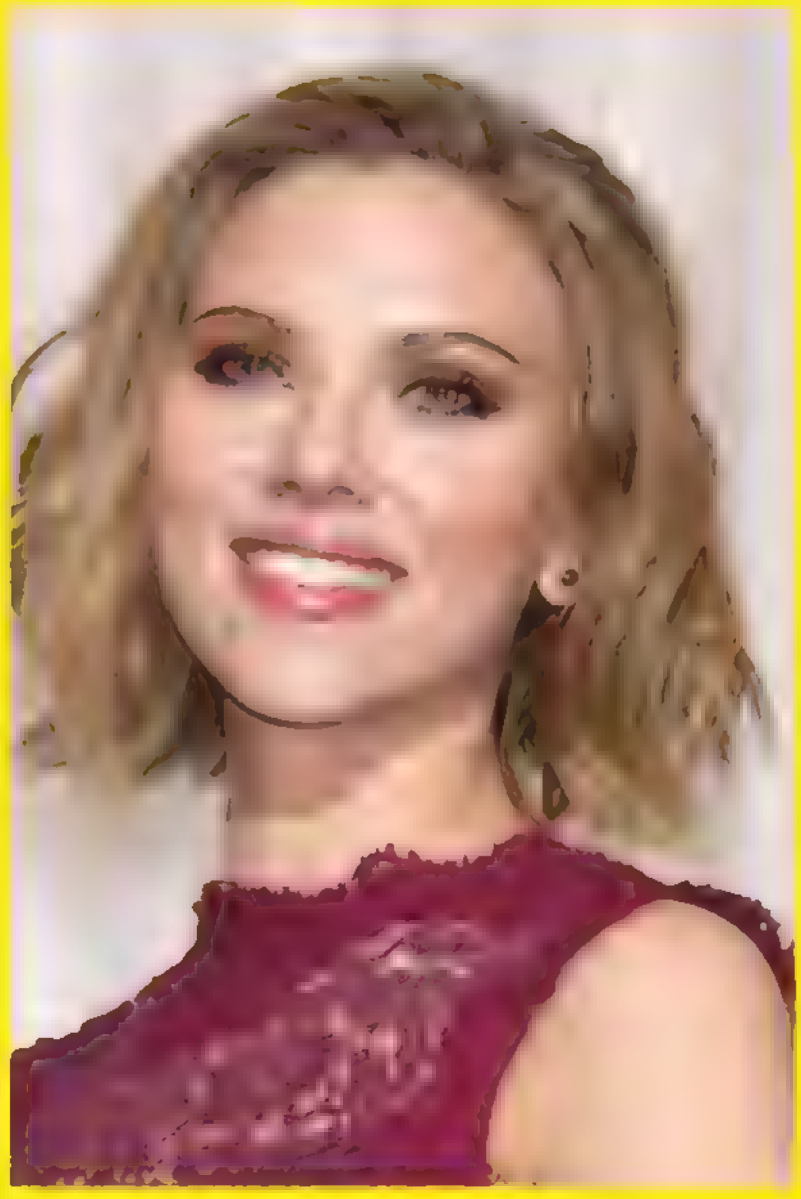
JOHANSSON: And it didn't turn out how you wanted.

PLAYBOY: And who knows whose fault it was?

JOHANSSON: I know whose fault it was! Of course, oh my God. Other times I've made movies that were really successful and I had no idea why. There are some nice surprises. For instance, when we made Lost in Translation, nobody could really see what Sofia Coppola's vision would be. We were making it in this weird fever of jet lag, in this new environment, and we shot it in 27 days. Lance Acord, our director of photography, may have been one of the only ones who could see what we were capturing. When I read the script, I didn't know. I was just kind of doing my thing with Bill Murray, just experiencing what the character was experiencing. And then it came out and it resonated with so many people. I never could have predicted that.

PLAYBOY: You were just 17 when you were cast in that movie. What's your experience of watching it now?

JOHANSSON: I haven't seen it in so long. I would probably think, Oh my God, I'm so young.



PLAYBOY: Your character, Charlotte, is 25 in the film and searching.

JOHANSSON: I had been working for almost a decade at that time. I was in a much older circle of friends and colleagues. That sort of yearning for purpose—I had maybe a greater understanding of what that felt like than other high school seniors.

PLAYBOY: Robert Redford, who directed you in The Horse Whisperer, described you as "13 going on 30." Have you always been an old soul?

JOHANSSON: I don't know. Like I said, I was taking care of myself from when I was pretty young. In a lot of ways I had to be responsible for myself.

PLAYBOY: Anthony Lane, who is a very esteemed film critic, wrote a profile of you that readers thought was so fawning it spawned several negative response pieces. I'm not suggesting this is the case with Lane, who I think is an intelligent and thoughtful writer, but there's certainly a history of male magazine reporters approaching beautiful young starlets in ways that feel limiting, if not absurd.

JOHANSSON: Women do it too, though. I've also experienced that with female journalists. I think they project. They have this strange way of comparing themselves to this idea of you. I'll read articles written by women about other women in which they say, "That perfect blowout reminded me of the fact that I hadn't showered in four days," or whatever. It's not only hollow, it's uninteresting. Maybe it's just more of a failure in approach instead of getting to the heart of someone, what drives them creatively, you just scratch the surface. I also find interviews a lot of the time to be very boring. Not this interview; this interview is not boring, but you're also lovely to talk to. When interviewers are self-deprecating, it becomes this weird I don't know, it can be exhausting at times.

PLAYBOY: People do sometimes write about you as if you've just drifted down in a beam of light.

JOHANSSON: Nice!

PLAYBOY: It must be hard to bear the weight of those projections.

JOHANSSON: I think it's actually ridiculous. It's absurd. Also, I have a lot of experiences where I'm like, "I can't believe this is happening to me." I'm still surprised by my job and the places it carries me. But my day-to-day life is a regular routine.

PLAYBOY: Not to sound dystopian or paranoid, but it increasingly feels as though in the future privacy will be our currency. We're all being rather cavalier about it right now—I'm being tracked all the time by this thing in my pocket, I'm giving all my information to corporations, and it's fine.

JOHANSSON: I couldn't agree with you more, having experienced that.

PLAYBOY: You had your e-mail hacked in 2011.

JOHANSSON: Yeah, that was crazy. It made me realize how vulnerable anyone is to that. The person who hacked my e-mail did

the same thing to 50 other people in the public eye and also to his ex-girlfriends—it could happen to anybody. And of course we're so cavalier about that. People are like, "Oh, who cares about me." But you're just as vulnerable.

PLAYBOY: I think almost anyone's e-mail would betray some bad behavior.

JOHANSSON: Well, it's just your personal life. Even if it's letters you wrote to your best friend, your sister, whatever, it's your personal stuff. It's like a journal. It's pretty crazy.

PLAYBOY: You've stayed off social media.

JOHANSSON: I just never got on that bandwagon. I don't even call people back. I don't even check my voice mail. It's not in my nature. I get it; it's a great tool for a lot of companies, a lot of causes. I don't know. I haven't missed it in my life at all.

PLAYBOY: Why open that door?

JOHANSSON: I don't have space for it in my life. If I had any kind of social media account, I would have to rely on somebody else to run it, and that seems like a ridiculous extra thing I don't need or want. I already read too much news on my phone. A couple of days ago my phone died, and I didn't have a phone for 20 hours, and it was wonderful. I was so thrilled. It may have been the first time in my life I wasn't panicked to not have my phone. I was just like, "This is great!" I had my kid with me. I was like, "I don't need anything. I got my kid, I'm good."

PLAYBOY: I suspect you were perhaps at the very tail end of the last generation of actresses who came of age professionally somewhat free of the scrutiny under which young women are held now.

JOHANSSON: Yes, I was You see some young actors performing, and you can tell that they're aware of how they're supposed to be, how the public sees them and what kind of persona they're supposed to convey. And that is unfortunate.

PLAYBOY: Tell me a little about your process as you prepare for a new role.

JOHANSSON: I start by trying to find some physicality to the character that I can hold and return to. Whether that's a self-consciousness, like a person who is worried about aging, or maybe it's somebody who, like the Major, has no sense of her own. She knows her physical body, but she has no care or awareness of her self.

PLAYBOY: That's also true of the women you play in Under the Skin and Her. Each of those characters is essentially just a disembodied consciousness.

JOHANSSON: With Her I actually had a hyper-awareness of myself because I was stuck in a black box. It's just my voice, and so you become hyperaware of certain habits. Doing the sex scene with Joaquin was an exercise in letting go.

PLAYBOY: Was it embarrassing?

JOHANSSON: I think he was really uncomfortable at first. He was so agitated, and it was really interesting to see him. It was probably easier for me because I had been in a black box for such a long time that I was like, "Bring it. I'm warmed up. Come on, let's get weird." In a black box you get this sense that nobody can see you, so you can be whomever you want. You can be yourself. But it was interesting to see how he reacted to it. He came around, though, and we did it literally, we did it. But the physicality is where I start, just being aware of how this story, these lines, what does it feel like in me, what does it feel like in my body, and then why am I having this physical instinct to be close with somebody or apart from them or self-conscious about this thing or that. In the case of Under the Skin, how can I be completely free of any of these and just be purely instinctive and animal? Or in Ghost in the Shell, I don't have any of these physical tics, these things that make us human. I'm devoid of those things, so what does that leave me with? What does this body feel like that's not my own? There was a separation between her mind and her body, so she had to think and then act on it. These kinds of things get me started. And then of course there's research. Even when I was playing Janet Leigh in Hitchcock, you just think about how she stands, and what it says about her strength, this fiery, driven person. The physicality is where it starts, and then it grows from there.

> "I'll read articles written by women about other women in which they say, "That perfect blow-out reminded me of the fact that I hadn't showered in four days," or whatever. It's not only hollow, it's uninteresting."

PLAYBOY: For me, one of the reasons you and Bill Murray are so satisfying to watch in Lost in Translation is because you share a subtle approach to the material. I think the word that gets used is underreactive. You don't seem afraid of silence or a blank stare.

JOHANSSON: I think it's really important for me to take time. The audience will stay with you. They'll ride the wave with you. That's the best part about doing live theater having the reaction, the feedback from the audience, because it's so informative. It's just absolute magic when the audience and you are riding the same wave.

PLAYBOY: You starred in the Broadway revivals of Arthur Miller's A View From the Bridge and Tennessee Williams's Cat on a Hot Tin Roof, both such rich and complicated plays. Growing up

in New York, was being on Broadway an early dream of yours?

JOHANSSON: That was my absolute dream. That's what drove me to acting. I wanted to do theater and be on Broadway. I wanted desperately to be in theater when I was eight. I wanted to be in musical theater, which I would never do now, ever. If I had to sing and dance in front of people, I would absolutely melt, fail miserably. But you have so many chances to get it right. You can get really weird, and you know that this is the only audience that will see it.

PLAYBOY: You've played so many characters who start out one way unfeeling, unknowing—and grow into something or someone else via their interactions with others or their observations of the world. I'm sure you're seeing some version of this unfold for your daughter now too—a broadening. Do you think we're all constantly changing into new iterations of ourselves?

JOHANSSON: I don't know. It might be interesting to play somebody who stays stuck. I don't know if it would be interesting to watch. Maybe it is. There's something really powerful about somebody who can't change themselves or doesn't want to change themselves. If you watch something like Barry Lyndon or think of a character like Dorian Gray, there's something really amazing about those characters. To watch the demise of somebody who doesn't want to or is incapable of changing. I'd like to get there, because it probably would help me understand a lot of people in my life. Maybe that will be the next thing for me. But up until this point, I think I've been trying to wrap my head around metamorphosis. Maybe now I've gotten to a stage where I can finally play that person who cannot change.

PLAYBOY: It seems there's a lot of possibility there for an actor.

JOHANSSON: It's so delicious, because I'm innately somebody who's curious about myself and trying to figure it out. My therapist would say, "Well, you make the same mistakes, so don't make them anymore." I don't want to make them anymore! But in life we make the same mistakes again and again, and

PLAYBOY: And then one day you don't?

JOHANSSON: And then you don't. That's the hope. But it's so interesting when a person keeps making the same mistake or is unwilling to change

PLAYBOY: I believe I know some of those people intimately.

JOHANSSON: Oh, I thought I dated all of them! Were there any left for you?

"I have a lot of experiences where I'm like, "I can't believe this is happening to me." I'm still surprised by my job and the places it carries me."

MISS Teela

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Tell us something surprising about you?
Surprisingly my parents give me a middle name which is quite an individual one... a football club.. yes they give me a football club as middle name

Were you excited to shoot for Playboy?
Yes this was something ive always wanted

What are some of your hobbies?
Gym, shopping, travelling and spending money i guess...

Which song is absolutely certain to make you cry whenever you hear it?
James Arthur Lasting lover

What is your favourite word in any language and what does it mean?
Hola means hello in spanish i dont know any other languages sorry haha.

Turn-ons?
Well I would have to write you a book i have quite a lot of them...

Turn-offs?
Hmm im also a very fussy person... so i do have a list of these

Describe to us your perfect date.
Romantic meal under water would do me just fine, nice company & nice wine.

Which world capital would you must like to visit, and why?
hmmm this is so hard as i want to visit so so many places, i still need to get to the Maldives.

MOSES SUMNEY'S

MOSES SUMNEY'S

MOSES SUMNEY'S

MULTIPLICITY

PHOTOGRAPHY BY **ISAAC ANTHONY**

With his sprawling new album, 'Grae,' the chameleonic artist demonstrates the joy—and the urgency—of defying labels

BY **STEPHANIE SMITH-STRICKLAND**

If he were a marble-hewn bust, Moses Sumney would be a masterpiece of plurality: bitone eyebrows, a jaunty loc crown, low-cut bleached-blond sides. Yet on this late-February day in Los Angeles, the very human artist is posing, leanly muscled and shirtless, in billowing black pants and an equally inky structural hat he jokingly observes resembles a gele.

His figure contrasts dramatically with the verdant backdrop of stubby lemon and orange trees spaced precisely across the small field behind him. Moments earlier, he and a stylist flirted with the idea of a plumed pirate hat paired with a sheer shirt he described as "a bit too Renaissance fair," though the accompanying nipple blockers piqued his interest. The deliberations echo Sumney's high school years, when he was not yet brave enough to sport the goth looks he secretly coveted.

The child of Ghanaian immigrants—who he later learned entered the country without papers—Sumney now resides in Asheville, North Carolina, where, according to the artist, everyone is a bit weird so he fits right in. In 2018 and for a large portion of 2019, he was locked away in isolation (well before it was a transnational requirement) finishing his second album, Grae, half of which appeared early this year. Grae follows the critically acclaimed Aromanticism, released in 2017 while Sumney was still floating on the accolades from his 2016 EP, Lamentations. His 2014 breakout, Mid-City Island, is a bewitchingly nebulous EP created on a four-track cassette recorder gifted to him by Dave Sitek of TV on the Radio.

By 2015 Sumney seemed poised for a more traditional kind of stardom, appearing on the opening track of Beck's album Song Reader and capturing the ear of fellow musicians James Blake and Solange, with whom he remains a close collaborator. He was seen as something of an indie darling by the major labels that courted him—a provocateur whose raw talent could be shaped into a more palatable idea of black indie artistry. He enjoyed the courting phase but ultimately turned down major-label offers in favor of Jagjaguwar, an indie label that has been home to Bon Iver, Unknown Mortal Orchestra, Sharon Van Etten and more. The label released Aromanticism and, on May 15, the full edition of Grae.

Hat, pants and boots vintage

Weighing in at 20 tracks and just over an hour in length, the project is a sprawling, open-ended statement on liberation and existing in liminal spaces. Its themes are starkly evoked in the song "also also also and and and," wherein Sumney intones, "I really do insist that others recognize my inherent multiplicity / What I no longer do is take pains to explain it or defend it."

"I realized over the course of the record that I could do anything," Sumney says, seated in a lofted alcove of the private home where the shoot took place, "and that the permission to do it is granted by me. So why not be audacious?" It's a rhetorical question, but it raises another: Is Sumney's audacity sustainable in an industry that tends to pay lip service to individuality while cramming it into boxes?

Much of the project's narrative language is established through spoken vignettes courtesy of friends and creators such as author and cultural critic Taiye Selasi, writer and speaker Ayesha K. Faines, actor Ezra Miller, writer Michael Chabon and actress Michaela Coel. Their voices provide structural reinforcement to Sumney's observations on the inherently fluid nature of cultural identity, gender identity and sexuality. Throughout the album, Sumney ruminates on how different modes of conforming to society can, if one has the courage, be deconstructed and then reconstructed to reflect personal truths in spaces of solitude.

"insula," Grae's opening number, begins with a looped, disembodied voice reciting "isolation comes from insula which means island" over a swelling string arrangement. For Sumney, who left his previous life in Los Angeles in 2017, the quietude of Asheville became exactly that — an island where he could freely reflect and, like a caterpillar in a cocoon, prepare for transformation.

"It's hard to care what other people think when you're not constantly confronted with it," he says in a rich, slightly weathered alto. "Living in L.A. you're constantly confronted with not only what other people think of you but your consciousness of what other people think of you. They might not be thinking anything at all, but you move in space in a way that you're constantly confronted with your own self. Being less and less around people, I was constantly confronted with myself — but not myself to the eyes of others; just myself to the eyes of my own desires. I always seek to be honest in the work, and I felt the most honest thing I could do was follow those desires, which are rather varied."

In the video for "Virile," one of Grae's lead singles, a shirtless Sumney dances through a meat locker, both taunting and fleeing from symbols of toxic masculinity with the abandon of a whirling dervish. It's a fitting accompaniment to a song that mulls over the constructions of masculinity, rejecting its binding tropes over a soundscape of harp, flute, strings and bass (the last one courtesy of producer, Kendrick Lamar collaborator and low-end virtuoso Thundercat). Bombastic and theatrical but at times deeply introspective, Sumney's voice acts as a liquid binding agent, melding the instrumentals into a cohesive waking dream, or nightmare, for those enmeshed in the performance of maleness.

"I'm actually getting back into it," Sumney says. "Masculinity, when it's positive, is sick as fuck. Unfortunately, the toxic version of it is what reigns on the earth. It's important to understand that there is masculinity and femininity in everyone, if you choose to identify with those two things. There are people who don't with either, and that's fine as well. I just think it's a natural part of the earth that they both exist. So now I'm just trying to think, what are the positive forms in which masculinity can exist? Sometimes masculinity is in women, and sometimes it's in men. It's the same thing with femininity, right? So now I'm like, 'Oh cool, I actually quite like being a man.' As long as it's not oppressive."

Such observations play into Sumney's larger thesis: We should all be free to exist in gray areas and to bend the rules in the same way those with structural privilege have always gotten away with doing. "In terms of who gets to bend the rules, it's foremost white men," he says. "It was fascinating to me how a lot of the tropes for how a man is supposed to act come from mainstream white society, but also the people who are forgiven the most for breaking those rules are then white men."

Hat and pants Cameron Williams

He goes on: "Growing up—not just in an African household, because it applies to black Americans as well—and thinking about the structure of the performance of masculinity and how much I could bend it, or weave in and out of it, was a process of unlearning. I think a big part of the unlearning was being like, Well, [white men] are doing it, so why the hell can't I? Your life might be harder, but you do have the choice."

Existing authentically outside assigned spaces, potentially sacrificing ease and profit, has no doubt complicated Sumney's career, but it has also given him a gift: the ability to grow and learn without the obstruction of others' expectations. Not everyone receives the gift, as he recently reinforced in a lengthy Twitter thread highlighting the many indie black artists (a number of them queer) he felt deserved more recognition.

Sumney's position brings forward an interesting dichotomy: On the one hand, popular music often embraces expressions of fluidity. From Prince to Freddie Mercury to Patti Smith, there's a long line of mainstream artists whose experimentation with ideas of gender and sexuality are inherent in their personal and professional identities. But their existence is the exception and not the rule—doubly so for non-white artists, many of whom are pigeonholed by the expectation that they adhere to tropes associated with prevailing ideas of "black music."

The weight of such implications is more than theoretical. It's genuinely difficult for left-of-center emerging talents to find ways to meaningfully take up space—to navigate their careers authentically when carving out said space is contingent on assimilation. Whether it's Sumney or an artist like K. Michelle, who gained prominence as an R&B singer purely because she was dissuaded from marketing herself as a country artist, we constantly see this conflict at work. More troubling, perhaps, is how easy it often is for white artists to move outside this framework, effortlessly shifting between identities, genre delineations and more, completely oblivious to the fact that their peers of color are rarely extended the same grace.

"There's the simple fact that once you do something in the world, it's like the world expects you to do it forever," says fellow musician Shaun Ross, whose albinism made him an uncommon face in the modeling world. Ross is transitioning into a music career, but he's finding that his history as a model and his experimental sonic aesthetic are often difficult for mainstream audiences to reconcile. Like Sumney's music, Ross's funk- and futurism-inflected sounds underlie queer experiences while defying easy categorization. Although his music has earned him a devoted fan base, it has also created hurdles in his efforts to infiltrate more mainstream music spaces.

"People must understand that before anything we are artists," says Ross. "We should all be able to have this freedom of expression that isn't attached to the need for labels, whether that be in regards to gender, race, sexuality or anything else."

Grae does not ask permission to do what Ross describes: create in a multitude of ways, all of which are true to the artist. Sumney's approach feels infinitely more exciting than dialogues that seek to make concrete constructs of the amorphous. "We have identity, and then identity on a national scale, and those conversations can be really porous and really shallow, and are really kind of boring," he says. "Everyone is just saying the same thing over and over. Whether they're on one side or the other side, it's just two sides of things. In a way, I didn't want to talk about it, because then I'd still be talking about identity. But it was honest to this project."

Sumney also leaned on his cross-cultural and cross-continental upbringing as inspiration for Grae. The upheaval of living between drastically different worlds produced a feeling of statelessness but also an understanding of how identity as it relates to nation, gender and even sexuality feels absolute only in certain environments—and why conversations around community and belonging can be myopic

"I was thinking about what it was like growing up on both coasts—on the coast of Africa and the coast of America," he says. "It made me think about how the foundation of my personality or identity is displacement, and where that comes from. I've been thinking more about feeling displaced, and that maybe I like different kinds of things because my life has been a mix of a lot of genres and I never fully welcomed any of them."

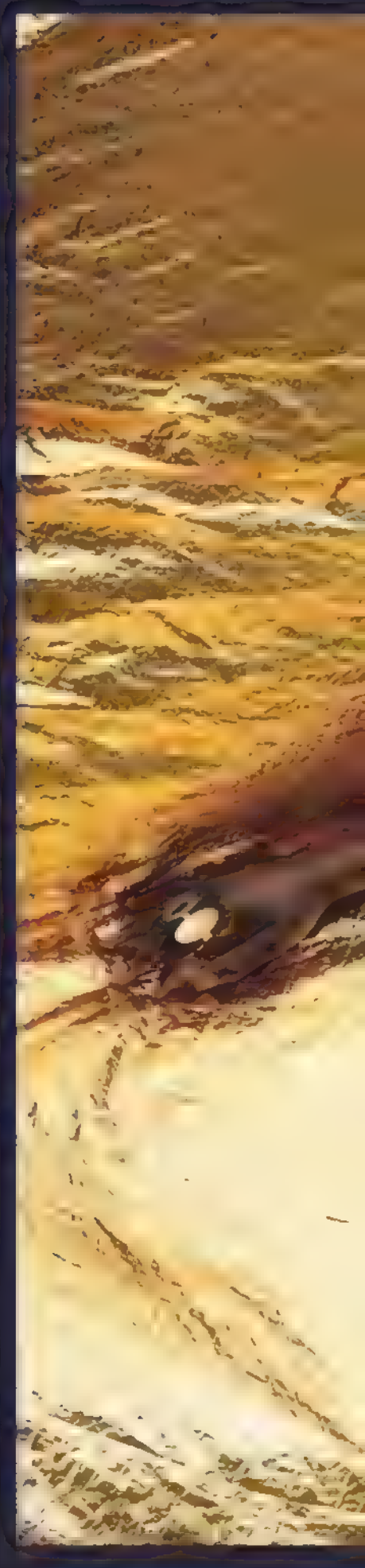
Like Sumney, Ghanaian American musician, singer-songwriter and engineer Amaarae grew up between Ghana and the U.S. Her music is also grounded in the exploration of identity. During time spent in Atlanta, she devoured Southern rap. In predominantly white suburban New Jersey, she discovered alternative and post-punk. Today the singer's falsetto croonings draw parallels to Esther Jones, the Roaring Twenties black jazz singer who was the inspiration for the character Betty Boop. Echoing Sumney's ruminations on both romantic and aromantic love in projects such as Passionfruit Summers, which features her 2017 single "Fluid," Amaarae challenges ideas of femininity, juxtaposing a babyish voice with an often androgynous presentation.

"The concept of fluidity can mean so many things," she says. "For me the idea of fluidity transcends what people typically associate it with, which is sexuality or gender. I actually think adaptation is a form of fluidity, and I guess that's something I've always experimented with. Living somewhere like Smyrna, Georgia and wearing Hot Topic to me is fluid. Kids were wearing Jordans and Iverson jerseys and I'm wearing goth clothing, and they're looking at me like, What the fuck? But pushing those boundaries and setting off those ideas in people's heads of what it means to live in your identity—all those things are important to me in my music and in my life."

While living in Los Angeles, Sumney similarly found himself questioning what it meant to take on an identity, more specifically one tied to blackness.

"I'd spent years trying to build community with people," he says. "This is actually way too honest, but I don't care. I actually found that for me, building with people, especially black people, I sometimes had to do it in ways that felt unnatural. Unnatural only because in order to be accepted, I had to shave down things about myself, shave down things about my personality, get rid of certain types of friends so I would be liked. I felt that was a necessary sacrifice, because it was important to me, and still is, to have community with black people and uplift black people. Then I was in isolation, and I was like, Oh, now I'm in community with the trees and birds and squirrels!".

Top: Marvin Desroc. Pnats Vintage



He allows a laugh and dives back in. "I had time to think about why we create these structures. Why do I have to pledge allegiance in a way that minimizes my individuality? I kind of started to rebel, and in diving deep and thinking about it all I still realized how necessary it is for people to have community, especially people who are marginalized and rejected by mainstream society. Community was and is a protective measure, and I think it really helped me empathize a lot better, even if the ways they built community can be unhealthy and damaging."

For all his talk of isolation and individuality, Sumney finds himself making a case—a characteristically complex one—for community. That would explain Grae's cast of contributors. It's an irony that reveals itself the more you listen: Without that range of voices, the album would feel less unified. This is the force that pushes Grae beyond a testament to solitude or an exploration of mere duality. Sumney's world contains as many sides as we need in order to encompass our true selves—emotionally, romantically, physically and beyond.

In a way, it's a self-effacing move made by a unmissable man, an openness he hints at as he explains his thinking behind that patchwork of spoken interludes.

"I knew I didn't want to talk on the record," he says. "I knew I needed a way to tie the songs together, because sonically the songs are just so disparate that they needed to blend into each other in order for it to feel like a cohesive experience. And then with those interludes, it was like, Okay, well—people need to talk."

NO TRESPASSING

Avianna

Élise

Welcome back Aviannah! Now that you have been in Playboy a few times, How does it feel? It feels so amazing, I would have never thought. It's such an accomplishment that I am still actually at a loss of words. It is always a huge rush when I am getting ready to submit my pictures and when I get the call that I'm going to be featured or on the cover then I just lose it. Overwhelmed with joy!

How are you enjoying Miami living so far? I would have to say it is very different. As I am starting to learn Spanish, I feel it will get easier as I go but boy oh boy, I was really in for it! The language barrier was definitely an issue. Even when it comes down to ordering a meal or trying to valet you car. Everyone assumes you speak Spanish. I will say the look on their faces when I don't speak Spanish is actually rather funny!

How have you been handling life with COVID going on? Being in Miami and Florida, in general is very hard since they messed up on over 60,000 test and it was all over the news. It was some what of a let down to know they had that many false positives and still kept us locked down. Me, Like everyone else, just wants to see this crazy virus go away!

Do you have any big plans coming up for 2021? Oh yes, I am doing My 1st All Nude Calendar that starts in my birthday month of May. This way you get more months of seeing me naked. I think a nude beach shoot is going to be the theme. Consider that an exclusive information for the magazine! They will hear it first right here.

We heard you recently started an OnlyFans page? That I did, I actually started FOUR of them to keep the content flowing! It is so much fun to finally be able to express myself freely how I want to. I find it easy to be in front of the camera thankfully! Everything always feels so natural.

What is your favorite type of shoot to do? Definitely have been loving the nude shoots lately for OnlyFans. Now that I have control over my content; I get to decide where it goes, how long it will be up for. Everything. I am definitely loving a lot of the opportunities that Playboy helped open the doors too. This past year since my first Playboy issue has been the best year of my career thus far.

You're in the best shape of your life. Can you tell us about your diet and fitness routine? Right now, I am honestly not doing much minus not over eating and I cut out most of the soda out of my diet. I left Starbucks in the diet though. There was no way I could get rid of that. My life just wouldn't be complete.

What is your guilty pleasure? Oh no, I feel like this is where the self snitching happens. Sometimes after a long shoot, I will stop by the store on the way home and grab some ice cream. I don't know what it is about it but there is nothing like a hot bath and some cold ice cream after a good photoshoot. Most of the time, I don't make it home without a nibble or two.

What advice would you give to new models who are new to Social Media? Damn this is a hard one since it involves a bit of the truth and most people don't like it. BUT the easiest way to grow is to *pay* big pages for shout outs. Its basically an

investment into your future. Just find someone who has the same niche for you and give it a try. I think as long as the niche is the same you should be good!

We also heard that you do not know how to swim? Ahh yes, That is very true but I do have plans to learn since I want to go scuba diving one day soon. I feel like It would be way easier to swim with fins on your feet!

What is one thing people may be surprised to find out about you? That I am a homebody. I rarely go out unless it is work related. Especially now that my fur babies are getting older and one is diabetic. I want to make sure I spend as much time at home with my family as possible. Life is too short to not spend it doing exactly what you want to be doing.

Any last words you would like to share with the readers? Never stop being you. Always be true to yourself, regardless of what others what to say about you. Even if people want to trash your name on the internet. Let them. Anyone who has a problem with me, I always say call me, lets talk about it but most of the time those people don't know me personally to even have my phone number to contact me. Don't take anything personal from someone you don't know personally.

Role *Play*

Could Be the Sexual Savior Your Quarantine Life Needs

Sales of sexy costumes are spiking as socially isolated couples fight bedroom boredom

BY **ANITA LITTLE**

Many of us have passed the six-week point in quarantine. For those lucky enough—or unlucky enough—to be marooned with a partner, this may be when things start to fray. The frustrating habits you formerly had a workplace refuge from are now your 24-7 reality.

Of the challenges couples may be dealing with, bedroom boredom is a big one. Physical intimacy is one of the few joys folks have left right now, and the increased time together is a great opportunity to refresh your sexy-time repertoire. And there's arguably no better form of sexual escapism than pretending to be someone else.

Enter sexual role-play. Your brain is your biggest sex organ, and role-play is an easy and safe way to test the limits of your imagination.

Recent stats show that more and more couples are discovering this. We reached out to Alicia Thompson, director of brand marketing at Yandy, a lingerie and costume company that has experienced a significant uptick in sales since quarantine started. (Full disclosure: Yandy is owned by Playboy's parent company.)

"People want to transport themselves out of what's going on during quarantine," she tells Playboy. "They are allowing themselves to push their boundaries a little bit more and maybe try to seek out pleasure in a new way."

From March 15 to April 12, Yandy saw a 31 percent increase in sales of its bedroom costumes, with the first major spike on March 22, which is no coincidence: That was the first weekend of lockdown for many states, including California and New York. The top costume searches for March and April were the expected role-play fare—schoolgirl, French maid, sexy nurse—plus tiger, a newcomer whose popularity Thompson attributes to a certain Netflix show. The latest numbers had Yandy sales up a whooping 136 percent year over year. All signs point to stir-crazy partners looking to liven up their routines.

Sophie Saint Thomas, popular sex writer and author of the upcoming Sex Witch: Magickal Spells for Love, Lust, and Self-Protection, describes role-play as "make-believe with very real orgasms." She says her role-play has increased in quarantine: She and her boyfriend enjoy cheerleader, housewife and complete-stranger scenarios.

"When you're stuck alone with one other person in a studio apartment, you've got to keep the sex interesting or else you'll start to hate one another," she tells us. "Sex is primal, but it does not have to be unthoughtful. Variety is the spice of life."

Playboy also reached out to sexpert Jess O'Reilly, Ph.D. and host of the @SexWithDrJess podcast, to get the lowdown on integrating role-play into your quarantine.

"Engaging in role-play is the antidote to boredom in the bedroom. This may be just what you need to get in the mood for sex when life is full of distractions or feels overwhelming," she says.

O'Reilly adds that the best role-play scenarios are often ones that stray from the roles you occupy in real life: "If you manage great responsibility at work or in the home, you may derive great pleasure from indulging in a submissive role. And if you spend most of your days catering to everyone else's needs, playing a selfish role may be the perfect escape from reality."

She emphasizes that couples shouldn't fixate on choosing a scenario; start by considering what emotion you're attempting to evoke and choose a scenario from there. If you want to feel more powerful or more submissive, try a scenario that revolves around a switch of the usual dynamics, such as boss and assistant. Want to feel safe or rescued? A firefighter scene may make sense. Above all, setting boundaries is necessary in any new sexual exploration, and great communication can't be understated. Your likes and dislikes should be an ongoing conversation with your partner. A few questions O'Reilly encourages you to ask: What words turn you on? What scenarios make you uncomfortable? What fears underlie this discomfort? How will you check in with one another during a role-play?

Sex is primal, but it does not have to be unthoughtful. Variety is the spice of life.

What about those who can't drop cash on elaborate costumes and props? Far more important than any getup is your own mind. With dirty talk, it's possible to create and fulfill any fantasy.

"Use your words," O'Reilly says. "You can weave stories, play roles, switch personalities, make empty promises that feel real—with consent—and lead your lover into far-off sexual and emotional lands."

Getting down to brass tacks, O'Reilly's offers three pieces of must-know advice for beginners:

1. TURN DOWN THE LIGHTS.

Many of us feel more confident and less inhibited in the dark, and it makes for fewer distractions.

2. WAIT UNTIL YOU'RE HIGHLY AROUSED.

Once you're there, your confidence will likely soar—so don't start the role-play until you've deeply indulged in sex play.

3. DO WHAT FEELS GOOD FOR YOU.

Instead of worrying about what your partner wants. Injecting your own personality into your new role will help ease you into character.

Once you've absorbed the basic tips and tricks, consider these looks—fun, easy to find and excellent for beginners.

Miss flying and travel? A "mile-high club stewardess" or "flight captain" costume could be what you need. In a world overrun with chaos, want to feel like you can still be your own superhero? Try on this "Glamazonian" fit for size. Need to pretend you're in a magical realm far, far away from the monotony of quarantine? Check out some princess lingerie.

No matter the fantasy, most likely there's already a costume or at least some racy dialogue for it. This strange moment in history allows couples to reevaluate their sex lives and adopt more adventurous attitudes. There's no better time to step out of your comfort zone and fearlessly explore what brings you pleasure.

This strange moment in history allows couples to **reevaluate** their sex lives and **adopt more adventurous** attitudes.

Pro Dommes

LAY DOWN THEIR WHIPS

As America shelters in place, a surprising new dynamic is emerging between dominatrices and their clients

WRITTEN BY
JERA BROWN

PHOTOGRAPHY BY
SAKKMESTERKE

"They're buying the sizzle, not the steak."

That's the advice I got from a friend when I was just starting out as a professional dominatrix. Clients are not just looking to be spanked; they're looking to be spanked by a cruel, latex- or leather-clad, larger-than-life mistress.

As is the case for any performer, maintaining an all-encompassing experience requires us to be "on," using a specific domme mind-set that sucks our clients in. But during this national crisis, being "on" comes with entirely new challenges.

"Emotional and psychological energy is in short supply for everyone these days, and I am no exception," Lady Sophia Chase wrote on the home page of her website. Lady Sophia is a Chicago-based domme who uses her master's degree in clinical social work in her domination practice. "I just can't step into 'Mistress mode' for online sessions right now.... Instead I want to talk with you."

Like many pro dommes, myself included, Sophia is focusing her stay-at-home energies exclusively on digital offerings such as phone and video domination sessions and subscription platforms such as AVN Stars and OnlyFans. But those who call Sophia will find themselves talking to a different domme from the one they'd meet in the dungeon, because Sophia isn't interested in getting into character right now.

The difference may be subtle. On a recent call with a long-time client, Sophia gave instructions for how to suck her strap-on—not something that naturally excites her. "But because my client wasn't there serving as a physical distraction, I was able to zone in on what actually does turn me on and marry it to what turns my client on," she tells me. "I feel like they got a more genuinely sexually enthusiastic me, whether they knew it or not."

We choose this line of work because certain things come naturally to us: We're not squeamish; we enjoy inflicting pain or discomfort; we need to be in control. All this is still true whether we're in "mistress mode" or not. But during sessions, we're frequently forced to play up how cruel or turned on we are and hide pieces of ourselves, such as gentleness or goofiness, that don't fit the character.

People who ask if I'm a "real domme" or "truly sadistic" don't realize that what they're looking for is only half of what I'm capable of offering. Many of my favorite clients are interested in getting to know the "real" me and seem to understand that compassion and sadism can go hand-in-hand. As a result, they're rewarded with vulnerability and a more genuine connection. And amid this national crisis, many of us find more men seeking this holistic connection with dommes. (It's worth noting that some dommes prefer not to share personal details with their clients, opting to keep their sessions in the realm of performance and fantasy.)

Mistress Eden Newmar, a Chicago-based pro domme who has been offering services in person and on the phone for four years, has found that regulars who once called her solely to be humiliated now wish to discuss their pandemic-era lives. They talk to her about their fear of losing their jobs, or they complain about the lack of privacy being stuck at home with their families. Eden believes these calls add new emotional depth to her relationships with her clients.

Why are the needs of clients changing in this way? My theory is it's all about control. I frequently see or talk to men with demanding jobs who are seeking an outlet where they don't have to be in charge and make decisions. These days many men don't have that sense of power. They no longer seek control or surrender; they want stability.

But not everyone's needs are changing. Many of my regular phone-based clients are looking for the same fantasies they've been calling me about for years. They don't ask how I'm doing, and they don't want me to ask about their lives, because they don't want to break the fantasy. They don't see me as a person outside that fantasy, and I'm perfectly okay with that.

As a domme who specializes in boxing fetishes and beat-downs, I get the majority of my calls from men who want to play out scenarios in which I use my incredible strength to kidnap them and keep them as my slave or work them over and humiliate them in my fantasy boxing gym surrounded by fellow pugilists with huge, sweat-slicked muscles—and ready cocks, for the bi-questioning.

These calls rarely represent what I do with clients in person. In a similar session we may simulate kidnapping or blackmail but only after working out safe words. Boxing often turns one-sided but never to the point of risking permanent damage. And these sessions always happen in private—to my knowledge, no orgy-ready boxing gym exists.

And yet fantastical virtual sessions are no less authentic or genuine. On many calls, I sense men are showing me a secret part of themselves that few have access to. Likewise, I bring out different aspects of myself. This can cut both ways: When seeing clients in person, I and other BDSM and fetish providers tend to use frameworks such as "risk-aware BDSM" and "safe, sane and consensual," encouraging limits and verbal consent. But phone and text-based sex work offers little to no room to discuss boundaries. Via calls and messages, I've beaten up people's wives and kidnapped, raped and even killed clients as they've jerked off and urged me on. I'm constantly questioning what responsibility I bear for the mental health of my clients. I also question why, even when I'm uncomfortable in these morally gray areas, I'm often turned on as well. All of this leads me to a deeper exploration of myself—to echo Sophia, whether the client knows it or not.

Sometimes being vulnerable requires us to be more honest about our everyday lives, and sometimes it requires more exposure to the fantasies we escape into—domme and sub alike.

I personally find online and in-person services equally meaningful, but others, such as Mistress Hecuba, cannot wait to get back to seeing clients in the flesh. As a pro domme, Hecuba balances fear and degradation play with healing work that focuses on somatic awareness. For her, online connections simply fall short. "There's something missing," she tells me. "It's intimate, but it's disconnected in ways that aren't as fulfilling as in-person play. It's disembodied." And yet even she has found that online sessions provide opportunities for a different kind of connection.

Hecuba recently spent an hour on the phone with one of her in-person regulars, simply discussing their relationship. Her submissive had a come-to-Jesus moment about what his role as a client should be. He'd been feeling neglected by Hecuba and realized the root of this hurt was his inability to accept that theirs was an intimate but still professional relationship—a common issue we face with clients.

For people we see in the flesh, these intimate discussions can be rare, but when they happen, they lead to better connections and better scenes. "To me, that's the perfect way to play," Hecuba explains. "The more I'm able to get to know you as a person, the more I'm able to give up myself to you."

This intimacy brings about a level of confidence and a greater ability to be nurturing but in the sadistic way that her clients are searching for.

"I know where you're coming from," Hecuba will tell her clients, "and I know you're having a hard time with this issue, but you're still going to stick your tongue in my asshole."

Many of my favorite clients are interested in getting to know the "real" me and seem to understand that compassion and sadism can go hand-in-hand.

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